



SPRING

No. 970

THE
CORNHILL

Geoffrey Grigson

Margaret Lane

John Piper

S. Gorley Putt

Peter Quennell

John Ruskin

Martin Turnell

With Illustrations

Two shillings and sixpence



1947

JOHN MURRAY

THE "THREE CASTLES" CIGARETTES

MANUFACTURED BY
W. D. & H. O. WILLS



20 for 2'8

"There's no sweeter tobacco comes from Virginia
and no better brand than the 'Three Castles'"
W. M. Thackeray—"The Virginians"

W. D. & H. O. Wills, Branch of The Imperial Tobacco Co. (of Great Britain & Ireland), Ltd.

TT.213.Q

HEFFER'S of CAMBRIDGE for BOOKS

on all subjects
English and Foreign
New and Secondhand

Just issued:

Catalogue 613 listing 500 Book Bargains.

Good prices are always given for fine,
rare and scholarly books.



W. HEFFER & SONS LTD.

Petty Cury • CAMBRIDGE

*For every Country House,
Club and Good Library*

The Quarterly Review

No. 571

7s. 6d. net

Contents of the January number:

The Expansion of Russia.

By A. L. Kennedy, M.C.

Spain, U.N.O., and Giral.

By Arthur F. Loveday, O.B.E.

Nature Opposed to Artifice.

By Douglas Gordon.

Reconstruction in Italy.

By Richard Goold-Adams.

Soft Justice.

By Leo Page.

Le Jour Viendra. [Lord Durham.]

By Marjorie Villiers.

Byron and Shelley in Venice.

By Robert Sencourt.

East Africa and the Returning Askari.

By Brigadier A. J. Knott.

The New Poetry. By Archibald Stalker.

The Indian Princes and the Cabinet

Mission.

By Sir William Barton, K.C.I.E.

Thanks to the War. By Eric Partridge.

Germany Approaches the Cross-

Roads. By Captain Jonathan Blow.

Some Recent Books.

JOHN MURRAY

ES



213.Q

e,

net

ert

I.C.

E.

on.

ms.

age.

ers.

urt.

ari.

ott.

ker.

net

E.

ge.

ss-

ow.

THE CORNHILL



No. 970

SPRING 1947

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNELL

	PAGE
EDITORIAL NOTE.. .. .	238
THE EDUCATION OF AN ÆSTHETE .. by <i>Peter Quennell</i>	239
RUSKIN AND EFFIE GRAY. II.. .. .	258
KUBLA KHAN IN WALES by <i>Geoffrey Grigson</i> Illustrated by <i>John Piper</i>	275
A HENRY JAMES JUBILEE. II by <i>S. Gorley Putt</i>	284
W. H. HUDSON'S LONDON by <i>Margaret Lane</i>	298
RAYMOND RADIGUET by <i>Martin Turnell</i>	302

JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

Of all the English classics, the works of John Ruskin are at the moment probably the least popular. Yet, judging by the welcome accorded to the publication of Ruskin's letters in the last issue of the CORNHILL, a revival of popularity cannot be long delayed: nor should it be, if readers still exist who enjoy superlatively accomplished writing and appreciate the astonishing capabilities of English prose-style. In this number, besides a second instalment of the Gray-Ruskin correspondence, we include a long essay on Ruskin's education, in which an attempt is made, with the assistance of that incomparable book, *Praeterita*, to elucidate the background, emotional and intellectual, of Ruskin's adult life.

We must also tender an apology. In the Winter CORNHILL, a number of photographs, illustrating Robin Fedden's essay, *Monasteries in the Sand*, were reproduced without acknowledgment to Miss Lee Miller, the talented photographer. For this oversight we wish to express our most sincere contrition.

[Subscriptions for the CORNHILL are now available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for 4 issues costs 10s. 8d. and for 8 issues 21s. 4d. including postage. A few copies of the last issue, Winter, are being reserved for those who would like to start a subscription to include that issue.]

gives
about
Faint
8-25-49
Shaw

The Education of an Æsthetic

BY PETER QUENNELL

I seem born to conceive what I cannot execute, recommend what I cannot obtain, and mourn over what I cannot save.'—John Ruskin to his father, 1848.

In the daily career of the virtuous businessman, there comes a hushed and solemn moment when, free at length from his office but still irradiated by the glow of satisfied commercial zeal, he sits down to unfold to his wife a detailed, unsparing chronicle of his efforts and endeavours during the previous six hours. This was the invariable practice of James Ruskin. Having returned, never unpunctually, from his City counting-house, he dined in his front parlour at exactly half-past four and while he dined, watched over by his wife, Margaret, who always sat beside him, he would talk, complacently or despondently, of his progress in the wine-trade. 'My father (wrote John Ruskin) was apt to be vexed if orders for sherry fell the least short of their due standard, even for a day or two.' John, an only child, was not admitted to these conferences. At such times it would have been a grave misdemeanour—and life was hedged in by possible offences: he had been whipped on numerous occasions for tumbling downstairs—to so much as approach the parlour-door or in any other way disturb his parents' discourse. But afterwards the family was re-united. On summer evenings they drank tea in their suburban garden beneath a white-heart cherry or, if the weather was cold, at six o'clock in the drawing-room. John Ruskin had his cup of milk and his slice of bread-and-butter, which he consumed in a little recess, fenced off by a table. There he remained as in a niche—the alcove was considered his peculiar territory—his mother knitting and his father reading aloud, usually from the Waverley novels; till James Ruskin threw down the last volume with 'an intense expression of sorrow mixed with scorn,' recognising in *Count Robert of Paris* that the career of Scott had ended.

For the Ruskins were cultivated, as well as affluent and virtuous. James Ruskin's leisure was limited: he had spent many years rescuing his fortunes from ruin, and owed his later success to a long miserable period of struggle and self-sacrifice. But he loved beauty, venerated antiquity and prided himself on keeping an open mind in all questions of the intellect. Moreover he enjoyed travel; and his career as a sherry-merchant provided many

excuses for rambling round the country. Neither of his two partners—Monsieur Domecq, the wine-grower, who seldom came to England, and Mr. Telford, an amiable old gentleman who rarely left his country-house—played a particularly active part in the business at Billiter Street. During the summer months, nevertheless, Mr. Telford consented to ride up to London daily; and the Ruskins borrowed his travelling-chariot and set off, the three of them, on expeditions that took their carriage across the length and breadth of England. In the chariot, as in the drawing-room, John had his appointed place. He sat well forward, between his father and mother, on a box which contained his clothes, perched up high enough in the high-hung carriage to command a wide view, over dykes and hedge-rows, of the whole surrounding landscape. Thus England, at least in the South not yet much scarred and disfigured by the industrial revolution, flowed away beneath his infant eyes—the prosperous market-towns with their coaching inns, from which postilions clattered instantly at the cry of ‘Horses out!’: the cathedral cities, their vast decaying churches still largely unrestored: and the noblemen’s seats for which Mr. Ruskin, who, in an unambitious way, was a considerable snob, had a romantic predilection. John Ruskin possessed a receptive brain: he was also a composed and obedient child, who followed his elders’ direction and shared their tastes and interests. For he had been brought up on regular and inflexible lines by a mother who, having given birth to her only child at the age of thirty-eight, had ‘dedicated him to God’ and still intended him to be a bishop. From the grim mythology of *Genesis* to the obscure horrors of *Revelations*, there was no part of the Bible, including, of course, the most tortuous genealogical passages, with which John Ruskin, since early childhood, had not been thoroughly familiar. The greater part of his schooling he owed to Mrs. Ruskin who, besides controlling his Biblical studies, was at pains to provide a solid groundwork in other less abstruse and more elementary subjects. Meanwhile the process of self-education was proceeding somewhat rapidly. With few toys and few playmates, he became, like many lonely children, precociously self-sufficient and, by the time he was seven years old, had begun to ‘lead a very small, perky, contented, conceited, Cock-Robinson-Crusoe sort of life,’ the central point of a circular universe created and maintained for his especial benefit.

Behind its frontiers he contrived to amuse himself with unusual success and skill. Writing and drawing both absorbed him; and when he was six, in a little red-covered note-book with narrow

blue-ruled pages, he embarked on an illustrated composition entitled *Harry and Lucy*, which owed a good deal to Maria Edgeworth but borrowed some of its material from Byron's *Manfred* and Joyce's scientific dialogues. The mixture was significant, as he afterwards observed, of the 'interwoven temper of my mind, at the beginning of days just as much as at their end . . .' In the same note-book, employing a careful script that imitated printed letters, he copied out a poem in rhymed couplets on the subject of the steam-engine, and another, in blank verse, inspired by the contemplation of a rainbow. Highly imaginative, he was yet extremely practical. Among the few toys in his bare and secluded nursery, he was most devoted to a box of building-bricks, which could be assembled to form the scale-model of a dignified two-arched bridge, perfect with 'voussoir and keystone' and a course of inlaid steps. He loved its solid mathematical elegance, and was never tired of assembling, dismantling and patiently re-building it. Yet his instinctive appreciation of the solid and definite was accompanied by imaginative stirrings of a very different tendency. Streams and rivers had always fascinated him; and, on occasional visits to Perth, the home of a family of lively Scottish cousins—the children of his Aunt Jessie, his father's only sister—he was captivated by the waters of the Tay 'which eddied, three or four deep of sombre crystal,' beyond the garden-boundary, or higher up, 'where Tay gathered herself like Medusa,' broke into 'swirls of smooth blackness' filling him, as he passed, with sensations of delight and dread. Such was the background of his imaginative development: on the side of the emotions, the life that he led was strangely bleak and empty. Demonstrative displays of feeling were not encouraged or countenanced in the sober Ruskin household. Father and mother were omnipotent and omnipresent. His sense of obligation to these mighty entities was passive and unreflecting.

Both his parents had suffered deeply; and on each the effect of suffering had been to increase the weight and harden the edge of an already serious character. James Ruskin's father, having brought his affairs to the verge of ruin, had at length committed suicide. The whole of his son's youth passed in an unremitting struggle to restore the family credit; but, before he left his Scottish home, at the age of twenty-two or twenty-three, on his way to the City of London to set up his own business, he had proposed marriage to, and had been accepted by his cousin, Margaret Cox, who since she was twenty had lived with the Ruskins in the capacity of house-keeper. Four years older than himself, the daughter of a widow

who kept an inn at Croydon, educated, nevertheless, in all the ladylike accomplishments, Margaret was a 'tall, handsome, and very finely made girl,' an exceedingly capable domestic manager and a 'natural, essential, unassailable, yet inoffensive, prude.' She waited for James until she was thirty-seven. 'My father (wrote John Ruskin) chose his wife much with the same kind of serenity and decision with which afterwards he chose his clerks.' Margaret was perhaps the more deeply in love; but James, through continued observation, had acquired a habit of complete reliance upon her sympathy and friendship. The long period of probation was followed by an harmonious and uneventful marriage. 'Neither of them (we are told) ever permitted their feelings to degenerate into fretful or impatient passion'; and the mood of sobriety in which they had embarked on life they afterwards transferred to the little universe they had created. Their rule was strict but equable. 'Nothing (remembered their only child) was ever promised me that was not given; nothing ever threatened me that was not inflicted, and nothing ever told me that was not true.' He learned 'peace, obedience, faith'—faith in his parents and blind obedience to their dictates, coupled with a peaceful acceptance of the well-ordered world around him.

Certainly, he was not unhappy. Punishments that seem outrageously severe by any modern standard, he accepted as a part of the scheme of things and, since he was a quick and submissive pupil, soon no longer merited. Not till much later did it occur to John Ruskin that the influence of his early education had perhaps been somewhat negative. Besides the cousins who lived at Perth, he had another family of cousins, offspring of his mother's sister, domiciled at Croydon, whose existence was as high-spirited and independent as his own was quiet and circumscribed. His aunt had married a local baker, but appeared cheerfully unconscious that she had thereby lost caste; and of one of her sons it was recorded that he had taught a younger brother to swim by tossing him head over heels into the waters of a deep canal. Suppose such treatment had been applied to *him*, John Ruskin sometimes speculated, would the effect have not been salutary? Might he not, by the experience of danger and the exercise of free will, have grown up a happier, more exuberant being? As it was, 'my judgment of right and wrong, and powers of independent action' (as distinct from independent thought) 'were left entirely undeveloped; because the bridle and blinkers were never taken off me.' Outwardly at least he remained the creation of his parents' wishes, poised observant on his seat in the travelling chariot, alone

in the drawing-room alcove, like an idol in its niche, listening, drawing, reading. Meanwhile, by mysterious processes that no parent, even the most devoted, could survey or supervise, there developed within the complex pattern of an individual character.

* * *

John Ruskin was born in London, in Hunter Street off Brunswick Square, on February 8th, 1819. When he was thirteen years old, in 1832, after a period of violent social unrest that seemed to threaten revolution, the passing of the first Reform Bill crowned the hopes of English liberals and ensured (though this was a result that Whig aristocrats would neither have understood nor welcomed) the future political predominance of the English middle classes. If every age has a representative building, and if the gentleman's house was the most characteristic architectural product of eighteenth-century civilisation, with its sense of space and its regard for human dignity—for the dignity, at least, of a privileged and happy few—the merchant's suburban residence, degenerating at a later stage into the clerk's Victorian villa, was the architectural expression of the age that followed. Now that the affluent tradesman no longer lived above his counting-house, the hills around London were tamed by the enterprise of a hundred speculative builders. With his top-hat beneath the carriage-seat, waiting to be donned as soon as he had entered the City, the merchant drove down from the suburbs every morning and every evening drove back again to his trim domestic Eden. It had some of the pretensions, without the amplitude, of a genuine country house; the park had shrunk to 'ornamental grounds'; but there was a stable-yard attached to the main building, and conservatories flamed in the sun; aproned gardeners weeded the gravel paths, and tended gaudy circular flower-beds and picturesque umbrageous shrubberies. John Ruskin was already four when his father, who during the last few years had been making steady progress, moved his household from urban Bloomsbury to suburban Herne Hill, where he occupied a semi-detached house, with a front garden full of laburnum and lilac, and a back garden, measuring seventy yards long by twenty wide, which was 'renowned over all the hill for its pears and apples' and enclosed by an unbroken hedge of gooseberry and currant bushes. Though they had many neighbours, neither of the Ruskins was of a sociable, expansive turn. James Ruskin was far too busy: his health, moreover, had been much damaged by early overwork: while Margaret, conscious always of her own undistinguished origins, was too proud or too

shy to cultivate acquaintances of whom she did not feel herself the perfect social equal. Besides, their plutocratic shop-keeping neighbours maintained a style of living, with 'great cortège of footmen . . . glitter of plate . . . costly hothouses, and carriages driven by coachmen in wigs,' that the prudent and modest Ruskins, who kept no menservants and burned only tallow candles, did not seek to emulate. Mrs. Ruskin could not boast a barouche : Mr. Ruskin travelled down to London daily by the omnibus.

Yet, as his affairs improved, the need for strict economy became, even to Mr. Ruskin's eyes, no longer quite so evident. When John was fourteen, a momentous change occurred. A year earlier, Mr. Telford, that kind old country gentleman, had given him Samuel Rogers' *Italy*, with vignette-illustrations engraved after Stothard and Turner. Today as we skim the pages of this supremely pedestrian poem, and examine the accompanying vignettes—grim crags, contorted pine-trees and feathery cascades, marble-smooth moonlit seas and deeply shadowed mountain-slopes, all hatched in with finicking precision by the engraver's laborious needle—it is difficult to understand the impression they made on Ruskin's youthful fantasy. But the effect they produced was immediate : Turner's illustrations opened before him a series of wide and brilliant pathways, down which his imagination raced from London to Lake Leman, and thence across the Alpine passes to Verona, Venice, Naples. Early in the spring of the following year, fresh excitement was provided by the publication of Prout's *Sketches in Flanders and Germany*. A copy was procured for Herne Hill ; and, when Mrs. Ruskin observed the delight which Prout's drawings aroused both in her son and in her husband, she suggested that this year—it was 1833—there was no reason why their annual holiday should not be extended to the Continent. Thus was formed the habit that soon became almost a rite in the existence of the Ruskin household, consecrated by their community of tastes and interests, and by the strong, if unexpressed, devotion that held the family together. Accompanying them was John's cousin Mary, now the only surviving daughter of his Scottish Aunt Jessie, who, after the death of her mother and sisters and the break-up of her own home (which brought to an end John's visits to Perth and his expeditions along Tayside) had joined the Ruskins at Herne Hill and ranked as an adopted child. 'A rather pretty, blue-eyed, clumsily-made girl, very amiable and affectionate in a quiet way,' Mary added 'a serene . . . neutral tint' to the existing household harmony. 'When we travelled (Ruskin wrote) she took somewhat of a governess position towards me,' John being four years younger

and by his anxious middle-aged parents considered very delicate. Together with Anne, the Ruskins' cross-grained nurse, and a courier named Salvador, in a comfortable travelling carriage specially equipped for the occasion, the party left England in mid-May 1833 as soon as they had celebrated Mr. Ruskin's birthday. They journeyed from Calais to Cologne, up the Rhine and through the Black Forest, explored northern Switzerland and crossed the Splügen into Italy, where they visited Como, Milan, Genoa; but at Genoa the weather was so torrid it was decided they should turn back. They re-crossed into Switzerland, and travelled north through France by the cities of Dijon and Lyons.

Their expedition was to be the first of many, each bringing with it some new, precious increase of knowledge and enjoyment. For pleasure and knowledge were now inseparable. Only in the life of the mind and imagination did John Ruskin breathe easily or exist completely. Though he delighted in the spectacle of the outer world and was training himself to record what he saw with a minuteness of observation that would have done credit to the patient engraver of one of Turner's vignettes, he loved and admired it always at a certain distance. He was still the solitary of Herne Hill; about his temperament there was still something of the lonely and pensive child who had spent hours gazing with rapt abstraction from his nursery window. Again, he was not unhappy. It is doubtful if, at any later period of life, he recaptured the exhilaration of those early journeys. Every stage possessed some separate charm—the departure, in a newly-chosen, newly-fitted travelling-carriage; the early trot through the London suburbs, enlivened by a 'sense of pity for all the inhabitants of Peckham who weren't going, like the pity of lovers on their wedding-day for everybody who is not being married; the change of horses at Dartford, feeling that the last link with Camberwell was broken, that we were already in a new and miraculous world'; to the exquisite moment when, one fine summer afternoon, the travellers entered a well-remembered town, for instance half-mediaeval Abbeville, and he could jump out into the courtyard of the Hôtel de l'Europe and rush down the narrow street 'to see St. Wulfran again before the sun was off the towers . . .'

Yet delight in foreign voyaging did not breed in John Ruskin any disgust for domestic life at Herne Hill. He returned always with satisfaction and, even abroad, among the Alps or in a French cathedral city, was faithful to the 'beloved sameness' of the life he led there. Thus, on his return to England in 1833, he plunged immediately and without regret into the atmosphere of 'self-

engrossed quiet' that his parents spread around them. The family-trio, as John grew up, and James and Margaret grew older and richer, far from expending its interests, was becoming more and more exclusive. The Ruskins had their *egotisme à trois*, as a later critic called it. They had, moreover, a pleasing sense of their own intrinsic superiority, 'the sense (Ruskin afterwards confessed) that we were, in some way or other, always above our friends and relations—more or less patronising everybody, favouring them by our advice, instructing them by our example, and called upon, by what was due both to ourselves, and the constitution of society,' to refrain from approaching them in any closer contact. John neither envisaged any possible change nor felt the smallest stirring of dissatisfaction with the existent scheme of things. Both as a precocious child and as a gifted schoolboy, he 'already disliked growing older—never expected to be wiser, and formed no more plans for the future than a little black silkworm does in the middle of its first mulberry leaf.'

The leaf was unquestionably large and verdant. Just as John acknowledged and bowed to his parents' adult wisdom, so they had come to acknowledge in their son a degree of intellectual capability verging upon genius. And they were happy to supply the nourishment that genius needed. During their original tour, he had had his introductory glimpse of the Alps, 'clear as crystal, sharp on the pure horizon sky . . . Infinitely beyond all that we have ever thought or dreamed—the seen walls of lost Eden could not have been more beautiful . . . ; not more awful, round heaven, the walls of sacred Death'; and to this glimpse, from a garden-terrace at Schaffhausen, he dated back all that in his destiny was to be most 'sacred and useful.' During their second tour, which took place in 1835 and was somewhat delayed because, in the spring of that year, John was laid low by a brief but dangerous attack of pleurisy, he enjoyed his first sight of Rouen (to which dear Abbeville was the 'preface and interpretation'), one of the three cities, Rouen, Geneva and Pisa, that 'have been, in sum, the three centres of my life's thought . . .' Venice was also studied; and John, who had set out equipped with a 'cyanometer,' to measure the blue of the sky, 'a ruled notebook for geological observations, and a large quarto for architectural sketches, with square rule and foot-rule ingeniously fastened outside,' returned home, intending to compose a poetic journal of the tour 'in the style of Don Juan, artfully combined with that of Childe Harold.' This particular project was never completed; but others took its place. Industry was Ruskin's natural element; and, though it may already have

been becoming obvious, even to his mother and father, that their hopes of seeing John a prince of the Church were unlikely to be realised, in all else he was a model son, with just enough vivacity and independent thought to make perfection palatable. Margaret Ruskin had begun to concentrate upon him the full force of her grave and pious nature. For James Ruskin he was the crown of a life's work, the symbol of credit redeemed and of triumphant commercial virtue. John would enter the world as a scholar and a gentleman: the disgrace of his grandfather's ruin would be finally wiped away.

John himself quietly acquiesced: he had none of that resentful restlessness which is the torment of many youths between fifteen and twenty-five: he understood the meaning of gratitude and felt the charm of loyalty. Given parents so well-intentioned and a son so talented, high-minded and admirably brought up, what opening could be found for the entry of those perverse spirits which combine to keep men miserable? Yet, looking back to his childhood across the gulf of nearly fifty years, Ruskin thought that he detected one main flaw running through his education: '... I had nothing to love.' The veneration he originally felt for his parents had developed into an unquestioning devotion, now that he no longer regarded them as mere 'visible powers of nature,' whose existence was inevitable and necessary like the existence of sun and moon; but there was more of piety in his affection than of genuine emotional zest. Thus the vicissitudes of love were still unknown to him, unknown the agony of loving in vain and the bewildering happiness of love returned and satisfied. He had had no friends whom he adored; he had never been spoiled or favoured; completely unversed in the management of his feelings—there had been few feelings in his experience of life that needed to be managed—he had yet a capacity for emotion that, although still undiscovered and unsuspected, was already growing dangerous. But the first hint of calamity did not materialise till Ruskin was seventeen, and then it was so slight and conventional as to seem at the time relatively unimportant. A vague warning—a hint of the hint—had been sounded three years earlier. On their way home through Paris from their Swiss and Italian journeyings in 1833, the Ruskins had paid a formal visit to the family of Monsieur Domecq, and had dined at his house, and met his five delightful daughters. They had impressed the English schoolboy, but he had naturally not impressed them; and the only comfort had been provided by the youngest of the quintet, Elise, who, 'seeing that her elder sisters did not choose to trouble themselves with me, and

being herself of an entirely benevolent and pitiful temper,' had advanced across the drawing-room and, leaning her elbow on his knee, had chattered to him for an hour and a half, mellifluously and incessantly, neither demanding nor receiving any sort of answer. Now, in 1836, the Domecqs came to London, the wine-grower and his wife, accompanied by Adèle Clotilde, 'a graceful oval-faced blonde of fifteen,' Cécile, who was thirteen and dark and finely browed, Elise, 'round-faced like an English girl' and still a treasure of kindness and native good sense, and Caroline, 'a delicately quaint little thing of eleven.' With some difficulty they were all fitted into the modest house on Herne Hill; and their visit, so far as the parents were concerned, passed off smoothly and agreeably. But for John its results were startling. This 'curious galaxy, or southern cross, of unconceived stars, floating on a sudden into my obscure firmament of London suburb,' were the first luminaries of their kind that he had ever met with. They were, indeed, literally the 'first well-bred and well-dressed girls I had ever seen—or at least spoken to,' beautifully but simply attired, devout Catholics, of course, but worldly and intelligent, speaking fluent French and Spanish, and English 'with broken precision.' At their side—especially at Adèle's side: for, though all the sisters stirred his imagination, the eldest had conquered his heart—his shortcomings sprang into cruel relief, and he both felt and appeared cold and shy and awkward. His jealous silences were long and miserable; and, as often as he attempted to shine or endeavoured to please his mistress, his 'patriotic and Protestant conceit' induced him to embark on just those subjects most likely to offend her, to talk of the triumphs of Protestant arms or the defects of Catholic doctrine. He was equally unsuccessful when he did his best to win her over by a display of literary talent, and wrote a story called 'The Bandit Leoni' for which he managed to find a place in the pages of *Friendship's Offering*. His only reward was to watch the 'rippling ecstasies of derision' that overcame her while she read it.

Then the nymphs departed—such a frieze of young girls in flower as Marcel Proust (whose genius had many striking affinities with that of John Ruskin) was to describe for a later generation with no less poignant emphasis—unconscious of the change they had caused, still laughing, no doubt, at the recollection of Adèle's naïve admirer, his conceit and his sentimentalism, his manifold Protestant absurdities and Anglo-Saxon crudities. If Ruskin's world had not been revolutionised, the possibility of a revolution was at least becoming obvious. It is arguable that our early

experiences of violent love determine all the others: that they fix an emotional pattern from which any subsequent escape is often strangely difficult: and from the pattern that Adèle imposed—which was strengthened, of course, by the idiosyncrasies of his temperament—Ruskin (one may hazard) would never escape completely. Love for him was always nympholeptic. He wrote of women—or rather of girls: youth, frequently extreme youth, was part of the provocation—as witches or fairies or delusive mocking spirits. There was pain in the immediate rapture, and, mixed with the pleasure of loving, a sense of impending loss . . . To these experiences, and their implications, John Ruskin's devoted parents remained luckily impervious. His father was not displeased when he saw John paying attention to his partner's charming daughter, and hoped that, if he wrote her verses, they might turn out to be as good as Byron's 'Hours of Idleness,' while his mother, 'who looked upon the idea of my marrying a Roman Catholic as too monstrous to be possible in the decrees of Heaven, and too preposterous to be even guarded against on earth, was rather annoyed at the whole business, as she would have been if one of her chimneys had begun smoking . . .' But she did not suspect that the house had caught fire, and henceforward a faint odour of combustion, portent of a series of disastrous conflagrations, would continue to hover through the building.

More serious projects were afoot: John must go to Oxford. He should have the best education there that was purchasable by money; but James Ruskin, with characteristic caution, first consulted the Dean of Christ Church on the propriety of a mere City merchant entering his son as a gentleman-commoner (which entitled him to the use of a separate table in Hall, and to a velvet cap and a silk gown) rather than as a studious, plebeian commoner. The Dean replied that, in nineteenth-century England, if one could pay for those flattering distinctions, one might certainly enjoy them; and, since the expense was no obstacle, Ruskin went up to Oxford as gentleman-commoner on January 14th, 1837. There he acquitted himself with prudence and, on the whole, not without distinction. Unworldly he might be; but he had sufficient knowledge of the world to hold his own among the knowing and aristocratic young men by whom he was surrounded. They received him with off-hand kindness, which afterwards developed into appreciation when they heard one of his questions, innocently but unexpectedly put, completely floor their tutor, and when they saw that he understood wine and had a head for it at least as solid as most of his contemporaries. If he was a puritan, he was not a

prig. He made no attempt to reform his acquaintances ; and they, in their good-humoured fashion, refrained from comment on Ruskin's curious habit of spending the evenings with his mother. For Mrs. Ruskin had come to Oxford. She lodged at an old house in the High Street ; and regularly at seven o'clock, after dinner in Hall and wine given or accepted, John would hurry round to meet her at tea and linger in her company till the bell summoned him from Tom Tower. On Sundays they were joined by James Ruskin, and all three, according to family custom, attended morning service at St. Peter's. But this was their only joint appearance. Otherwise father and mother remained considerably unobtrusive.

They were repaid by the spectacle of John's steady upward progress. He read diligently if not excessively, entertained his fellow gentlemen-commoners in a handsome but moderate style, and made friends of the right sort, without acquiring as he did so any complementary vices. There was Henry Acland, who delighted him ' as a leopard or a falcon would,' and Francis Charteris, ' on the whole the grandest type of European Circassian race hitherto visible to me,' an engaging young man, possessed of delicate good looks, much sense and a fund of ' subtle, effortless, inevitable, unmalicious sarcasm,' who ' never troubled himself about anything ' yet succeeded in all he did. Ruskin admired ; but he was not influenced. Always slightly a stranger at Oxford, upheld, moreover, by that sense of intrinsic moral worth he had acquired at Herne Hill, he drifted smoothly through his years of residence, emerging unspotted and unscathed, none the worse (as his parents gratefully noticed) but also none the wiser. He was still in love, or clung to the idea of being in love with strange and touching obstinacy. Adèle herself had done nothing to encourage him. Indeed, when, during the latter part of 1838, Monsieur Domecq announced that he was bringing over his four unmarried daughters to conclude their education at a convent near Chelmsford, and Adèle and her sisters returned at Mrs. Ruskin's invitation to spend their holidays at Herne Hill, he found her, if possible, even less responsive ; never ' in the least amiable,' though ' firm, and fiery, and high-principled,' her character had grown no more ingratiating, her attitude towards John Ruskin no more sentimental. Physically, too, she had changed. Beautiful at fifteen, Adèle Domecq at eighteen was not prettier or more beguiling than the average French girl. Ruskin saw and felt the change ; but his passion had now established itself in depths of his nature from which the critical faculty alone was powerless to dislodge it, and from which it proceeded to lay a maleficent spell upon his whole existence. Months

slipped by in miserable confusion, in a welter of 'complex absurdity, pain, error, wasted affection and rewardless semi-virtue . . .'

The life of the mind, however, in spite of the turmoil that possessed his heart, continued almost without interruption. In 1839 he won the Newdigate Prize, and two years earlier had begun a series of architectural essays, published in the *Architectural Magazine* under the pen-name 'Kataphusin,' which were well-received by the public and remained 'curiously right up to the points they reach' according to the essayist's considered later judgment. Already he had a vision distinctly his own, already the gift of translating that vision into eloquent, harmonious imagery. His prose-style was clear and sensible, formed on the Johnsonian pattern. But, although unusually precocious in everything that touched the intellect, in other important respects he was astonishingly immature. Had John Ruskin been one of those human beings from whose composition the instinct to love, and the desire to possess what we love, unaccountably have been omitted, he might have developed without regret or misgiving into a self-sufficient celibate, happy among his books and drawings and costly mineral specimens, spending his income and canalising his emotions in the pursuit of art and science. But the passion that was to make of him an artist also destined him to be an amorist. Adèle might have changed and deteriorated; but nothing could shake his conviction that he deeply, passionately loved her. His love existed with a life of its own. James Ruskin, now becoming vaguely alarmed, endeavoured to distract his attention and even introduced him to a Miss Wardell, a 'softly moulded slender brunette' of ample fortune and charming disposition, whose parents lived at Hampstead; but John merely announced that she was 'not his sort of girl'—he liked long uncurling fair hair, oval clear-skinned faces; his visits were suspended and Miss Wardell died soon afterwards. It must be Adèle, or it should be no one. The impossibility of possessing Adèle enriched her like a halo.

The moment arrived when he heard she was to be married or, rather, when he learned that negotiations with a view to marriage were taking place between the Domecqs and the family of an eligible French sportsman whose name was Baron Duquesne. During the autumn of 1839 he wrote her a poetic *Farewell*; and in the following March, when Ruskin had already celebrated his twenty-first birthday, Adèle Domecq achieved the fate for which by upbringing and disposition she had obviously been intended, and emerged from the chrysalis of the *jeune fille bien élevée* as a dashing young married woman. It was the right, appropriate, inevit-

able step. But not all his recognition of her social unsuitability, emotional poverty and intellectual nullity could shake Ruskin's attachment to the image that he had built up. In *Farewell* he had given it a Byronic colouring :

Yet come—and let thy glance be dim,
And let thy words be low ;
Then turn—for ever turn—from him
Whose love thou canst not know ;—
And reck not of the faithful breast
Whose thoughts have now no home—no rest—
That wreathed, with unregarded light,
Thy steps by day, and sleep by night.
Then when the wildest word is past,
And when mine eyes have looked their last,
By every barrier earth can twine
Cast in between my soul and thine—
The wave, the wild, the steel, the flame
And all that word or will can frame :
When God shall call or man shall claim,
Depart from me . . .

Yet, unlike the average youthful passion, having assumed a literary form, it did not thereupon begin to lose its potency. The crisis deepened : the hurt enlarged itself : a sense of frustration, which combined a touch of wounded idealism with something of the wayward child, gradually extended through the background of his daily life, till the troubles of the spirit found concrete expression in disorders of the body. Against the advice of his excellent holiday-tutor, Osborne Gordon, who had warned him : ' When you have got too much to do, don't do it,' Ruskin had changed his plan of work and, no doubt by way of emotional relief, often dragged out his Oxford working-day from six o'clock in the morning to close on midnight. Suddenly the climax materialised. One evening—it was, as he remembered, a Saturday or a Sunday—a ' short tickling cough . . . preceded by a curious sensation in the throat, and followed by a curious taste in the mouth,' surprised him while he sat at his desk, and sent him round to seek comfort and counsel at his parents' High Street lodgings. The taste had been that of blood. Mrs. Ruskin was an expert in cases of pulmonary consumption ; at her direction John left Oxford and returned obediently to Herne Hill. His first adventure as an adult human being, which coincided with his first experience of the pleasures and pains of love, thus terminated in a strategic with-

drawal, behind the frontiers of the eclectic private universe he had been constructing since his childhood.

James and Margaret Ruskin at the same time—Margaret more particularly—gained an additional hold over their son's obedience that, although it was weakened by the passage of years, they never quite abandoned. He seldom fretted at the restraints they imposed, notwithstanding grieved speculations several decades later as to the harm they might have done him ; for, with much that was masculine and wilful, his character preserved always a certain strain of self-indulgent femininity. Wishing for protection, appreciating devotion, gifted, moreover, with the art of slipping away as often as he pleased into a closed garden of the intellect, where his parents could not pursue but admired him from afar across the boundary-hedge raised by his superior knowledge, he was well-suited to the career of the invalid only child, for whom nothing was too good and every sacrifice was justified. The household, of which he had once formed an inconspicuous fraction, now revolved around its son and heir, being gradually remodelled to meet his tastes and interests. Mr. Ruskin was induced to purchase Turners and, though often alarmed to notice that his son was an extremely bad businessman, abetted him in founding a collection of water-colour sketches. On John's twenty-first birthday his father had given him Turner's sketch of Winchelsea, a little drawing that, with its 'thundrous sky and broken white light of storm round the distant gate and scarcely visible church,' seemed to contain a prophetic reflection of troubles that still impended. Amid the confusion and distress of feeling, which had accelerated, if it did not produce, the breakdown of his health at Oxford, and in which he remained plunged months after he had left Oxford and fallen back on Herne Hill, his intense love of natural beauty provided a solitary guiding beam. The doctors had ordered him abroad, and it was with 'some renewal of spirit,' some relief from the 'sickly fermentation of temper' under which he had been labouring, that he looked forward to re-visiting Italy and viewing the classical prospects that Turner's genius had illuminated. His expectations were far too sanguine. The disease of the body might slowly yield ; the adversary lodged in the mind proved subtler and more obstinate.

He did not enjoy his Italian tour ; for, though the idea of beauty continued to draw him, and he had by no means lost all his early delight in the pleasures of the intellect, a shadow perpetually intruded itself, disfiguring and discolouring every landscape that he passed through. He was sick and weary and fretful. To spare John unnecessary pain, the family *cortège* did not on this occasion

travel south by way of Paris. From Rouen they made for the Loire, and thence, across Auvergne, to the cities of the sea-coast. The South of France proved eminently displeasing; and in Italy, during the first few weeks, John found little enough to interest or distract him. The Arno at Pisa appeared a dull and muddy stream. Florence he explored with feelings of 'grievous disappointment,' hating the 'Newgate-like palaces,' considering 'the inside of the Duomo a horror, the outside a Chinese puzzle,' and the whole city, country round-about included, 'a provocation and weariness, except for one master, M. Angelo.' At Siena, where he had a bad headache, 'the cathedral seemed to me every way absurd—over-cut, over-striped, over-crocketed, over-gabled, a piece of costly confectionery and faithless vanity'; while 'the first sight of St. Peter's dome, twenty miles away, was little more to any of us than the apparition of a grey milestone, announcing twenty miles yet of stony road before rest.' As for the sluggish flood of the Tiber, what a 'vile and saddening sight'! A nearer view of St. Peter's, and a brief inspection of the 'clumsy dulness of the façade, and the entirely vile taste and vapid design of the interior,' confirmed him in the dislike he felt for most Renaissance monuments. The ceremonies of the Catholic Church were equally confusing and exasperating; and, if he ever consented to attend them, it was in the hope that he might catch a momentary glimpse, over the heads of the Italian crowd, of the fair regular features of an exquisite English girl, whom he never approached and never spoke to, but whose beauty—'statuesque severity with womanly sweetness joined'—was among the rare consolations of a dismal overclouded winter.

As yet the clouds showed no signs of lifting; and his state of mind continued to puzzle himself as much as it perplexed and mortified his parents. Flashes of happiness suddenly visited him—for instance at Sestri di Levante, described in a memorable passage of his early journals. But such enlightenment was seldom long-enduring; and on December 30th, after a touch of local fever, he describes in his diary how he has been walking to and fro upon the Pincian, with the loveliest of prospects before him—

. . . A light Decemberish mist, mixed with the slightest vestige of woodsmoke, hovering between the distances, and giving beautiful grey outlines of every form between the eye and the sun . . . It was not like moonlight, nor like sunlight, but as soft as the one, and as powerful as the other.

—unable to decide why it was that 'every imaginable delight palls so very rapidly. . . .' Gardens, obelisks, palaces, the vision of far-

away Apennines, 'with one principal pyramid of pure snow, like a piece of sudden comet-light fallen on the earth,' could not disguise from him the fact that he felt, above all else, tired and sullen and despondent. But he still saw, though he could not enjoy; and his record, kept at the time, of the Ruskins' expedition from Rome to Naples during the early days of January is full of felicitous images and brilliantly descriptive strokes, which reveal both his precocious command of language and the quickness and hypersensitiveness of his perceptions when he confronted natural beauty. He reached Naples, nevertheless, as usual disappointed, almost weeping with exhaustion, and, on the return journey at Albano, experienced a further hæmorrhage, which, although no more serious than the first, caused James Ruskin to look extremely troubled and hurry ahead to Rome to fetch the English doctor. But the doctor's verdict was reassuring; and meanwhile there were other hopeful symptoms—intimations, dim at first, it is true, of an improvement in his mental health. Rome re-visited during Easter-week seemed far less void and desolate than his impressions of the winter-months; even the church-services had begun to touch and interest him; and, as the family travelled northwards, John's spirits gradually rose, achieving a pitch of real rapture, when they arrived at the lagoons of Venice and he saw 'the black knot of gondolas on the canal of Mestre.' 'Thank God I am here,' he wrote in his diary on May 6th, 1841; 'it is the Paradise of cities.' At last he had found a spiritual home, a refuge which could be compared only to his beloved Alpine solitudes. 'This, and Chamouni,' he concluded, 'are my two bournes of Earth.'

During the same summer, among the mountains themselves, he received as it were a confirmation that he had made his peace with destiny. Ruskin's intelligence had a highly symbolic turn. His original glimpse of the Alps 'had been to me as a direct revelation of the benevolent will in creation,' while, later, the volcanic landscape around Naples, where the primaæval fires beneath the earth are still manifest in lava-streams, burning ash and clouds of poisonous vapour, had represented its malevolent counterpart—'if not the personality of an Evil Spirit, at all events the permitted symbol of evil, unredeemed; wholly distinct from the conditions of storm, or heat, or frost, on which the healthy courses of organic life depended.' Typical both of primitive man and of the poet in the civilised world, an addiction to such symbolism is also characteristic of certain nervous maladies. Ruskin's cast of mind was strongly poetic; that his mental equilibrium was somewhat precarious might already have been inferred from the state of

prostration to which he had been reduced by the disappointment of his first love. Now the mountains brought him symbolic succour, and completed the beneficent effect of those enchanted weeks in Venice. At six o'clock of a summer morning, he woke from sound sleep in a one-windowed, wood-walled bedroom, dressed quickly, ran along the village street, crossed a brook and climbed a grass slope opposite. Beneath the pine-boughs he had a moment of illumination. Hope, a sense of purpose, belief in the future were suddenly re-kindled. 'I had found my life again;—all the best of it . . . I went down thankfully to my father and mother, and told them I was sure I should get well.'

Thus the crisis passed. Returning to England, John Ruskin was permitted for the first time to make an independent journey—to North Wales, where he wished to visit and sketch the mountains of Snowdonia—though subsequently enjoined to break it off, when his mother and father learned that Dr. Jephson of Leamington Spa had decided their young invalid, who had consulted him on the way, was in need of further treatment. Dr. Jephson's treatment proved efficacious, and by May he was well enough to take his degree, a double-fourth, at Oxford. During the autumn months of 1842, the Ruskin family, after anxious and prolonged discussion, moved from their semi-detached house on Herne Hill to a considerably larger house on nearby Denmark Hill which, besides the genteel quality of detachment, possessed many other attributes of a decorous and distinguished kind, such as a big garden, hothouses and stables, even a miniature home-farm that gave them milk and butter. The central building, a merchant's residence of the late-Georgian period, was square and plain and dignified; and within its shelter the life of the Ruskin family was soon re-established on the customary agreeable pattern, self-sufficient, unassuming yet modestly luxurious. Here, among his pictures and books, waited on by a devoted valet, secure in the enjoyment of the adequate personal allowance his father now contributed, John was free to pursue studies and to cultivate inclinations that, as he himself felt and as his parents agreed, were alike completely admirable. From 1842 to 1847, between the critical ages of twenty-three and twenty-eight, there was little outward change in the life he led; while suggestions of inward strain, at least on the scale of the previous crisis, were very rarely evident. Richmond painted him in 1843, a pensive yet engaging youth, who turns away from a mahogany writing-desk, a portfolio at his feet, a pen poised between his fingers. Diligence and good breeding are implied by every detail—the apparatus of his work around him, varnished boots,

slim trouser-legs, the fine velvet-collared frock-coat. This was the young man who, when some congenial and cultivated visitor gained admittance to the house on Denmark Hill, having survived the preliminary inspection that must be gone through at the porter's lodge, would come running downstairs, the blue of his neckcloth a match for the blue of his eyes, both hands outstretched in welcome, to show his Turners and the Tintoretto, the Joshua Reynolds or the alleged Titian that James Ruskin had collected. He was exceedingly busy, yet naturally hospitable. But, once the visitor had gone, he would dart back to his work-room, remaining there till Margaret Ruskin, who still watched over his health with the same assiduous attention that she devoted to her house and servants, packed him off for his afternoon walk, which usually took him to the Dulwich Gallery or on a visit to a fellow-enthusiast who could show him Turner drawings. After dinner, it was his custom to work another hour or two. But he went early to bed—Mrs. Ruskin had not forgotten the disastrous result of those protracted Oxford vigils—and at breakfast he would read aloud some eloquent addition to the book his family knew him to be writing, a celebration of the genius of the modern landscape painters. Occasionally, neglectful of Turner, mineralogy and the beauties of Venetian art, he would devote his attention to a less important project. Thus, when, in 1841, a little girl named Euphemia Gray, the daughter of friends who lived near Perth at Bowerswell, visited Denmark Hill and spent some days among the Ruskins, he amused her by writing a fairy-story, afterwards published as *The King of the Golden River*.

Ruskin and Effie Gray. II

In the Winter issue of the CORNHILL we published, by courtesy of Sir Ralph Millais and Admiral Sir William James, a series of extracts from John Ruskin's letters to his future wife, Euphemia Gray, written during the years 1847 and 1848, just before their marriage. A detailed account of the Ruskins' married life will be found in Sir William James' forthcoming study, 'The Order of Release.' Meanwhile we are privileged to print further extracts from unpublished correspondence, which cover the whole period of their relationship between marriage and separation. At first there is no hint of strain. So far as her parents could judge, the course of Effie's honeymoon was tranquil and unclouded. An affectionate and well-brought-up young woman, she sent home from Scotland and the Lake District long enthusiastic descriptions of local food and scenery. Landscapes were duly impressive, inn-rooms warm and comfortable. They had dined off 'Ham and eggs and Fine Potatoes with small trout': John was 'quite amused' to see how much she loved the Highlanders. At Penrith the pea-soup was bad: but then, the fish was excellent. And, though she was disappointed in the mountains round Keswick—'merely good hills without crag or colour'—'still everything looks very sweet': they had made some enchanting tours and had enjoyed a good picnic luncheon of sandwiches and rhubarb tart . . . But the honeymoon soon came to an end; for John was anxious to start work on the proofs of a second edition of 'Modern Painters'; and towards the close of April they returned by rail to London. Mr. Ruskin met them at Euston Station in his carriage, a vehicle that struck Effie as 'very nice and handsome being all newly painted and lined, and Powell in new coat with Numerous capes, and hammercloth, etc., in honor of our arrival.' From Euston they drove to the family house on suburban Denmark Hill, where they were welcomed by Mrs. Ruskin amid her servants in all the spreading splendour of prosperous middle-class gentility:

. . . When we arrived at the gate of the garden the carriage stopped and the Gardener presented me with the most splendid bouquet of Geraniums, Orangeblossom, Heath of the most delicate kinds, Myrtles, cineraria, etc., all tied in ornamental Paper and with White Satin ribbon. When we came to the door the servants were all standing with Mrs. Ruskin to welcome us, the women looked so nice with their neat caps of white net and ribbon and green and stone colored mousselines up to the neck with their

muslin aprons. Mrs. Ruskin had on a most splendid rich drab or pale brown satin with rich fringe on the front . . . and a white blonde cap, she and Mr. Ruskin never saw John looking half so well and are quite delighted to see him so happy—and she bids me say how happy she is to have me here and she hopes now I will feel quite a daughter to her, but to go on— When we had dressed and gone into dinner a band of Germans came and played delightful music before the windows all time of dinner and it was a great treat. We spent the evening very happily. I played to Mr. Ruskin and Mrs. R spoke to John and Me and made kind speeches. Mrs. R has given us the top of the house and very comfortable it is. Mr. Ruskin, John and I go tomorrow to the private view of the Academy where we shall see all the nobs.

Effie's desire to consort with nobs for a time at least received the complete approval of John's adoring parents ; and Mr. Ruskin on May 24th, writing to her father, observed that he was ' glad to see Effie gets John to go out a little. He has met most of the first men for some years back but he is very indifferent to general Society and reluctantly acknowledges great attentions shown him and refuses one half—Seven years ago he refused to spend a month at the Duke of Leinster's . . . ' There could be no doubt, on the other hand, of Effie's social gifts and instincts. With the excitement of a young girl and the gusto of a newcomer, she proceeded to make her way on John's arm through the elaborate ceremonial of a mid-Victorian season. Clothes delighted her, and she wrote of them at length ; even today the colours glow, the texture of silk and velvet gleams or glistens. Thus for a private view—' you know (she reminded her provincial audience) it is a great compliment getting these tickets and you only meet there the artists themselves and the nobility'—she had worn her ' pale glacée silk, White lace bonnet, black Mantilla, pale gloves, etc.,' while John for his part was ' also very well dressed.' The spectacle was exhilarating ; and now her eye was caught by three Dukes on a row with their complement of Duchesses ; now it wandered to a youthful dandy, one of Lord Ravensworth's sons (all of them, it turned out, John's great admirers) conspicuous for a talkativeness most unusual ' in this age of Nonchalance' and for the ' exquisite gloves which he kept drawing off and on with the same energy he displayed in conversation.' Her parents-in-law professed themselves ' entirely pleased' with their new domestic acquisition ; and she herself was delighted with her new life and with the homage she continued to receive from her husband's distinguished friends. Samuel Rogers invited her to breakfast, showed her his bijelots and said she had a fine taste. Turner, John's idol, entertained them with wine and biscuits in his ' bare and miserly' room. There was

a sumptuous dinner party given by Lady Davy, at which Effie was 'much amused and enjoyed all I saw,' and another, of a more elderly and instructive kind, where John and the Bishop of Norwich 'got into a long and learned discussion upon the migratory habits of seagulls.' Grisi and Lind sang for her delectation. Lansdowne House flung open its doors; and, moving through the crowded ballroom, Effie noted the Duke of Cambridge looking like 'the public Auctioneer,' old Lady Morgan 'painted up to the eyes' and an enviable creation in 'pale primrose satin with black Laceflounces and velvet bows all about it with diamonds inside.' No shadow had yet appeared: none, that is to say, was reflected in her letters home. 'I am happier every day with John (she informed her mother and father) for he really is the kindest creature in the world and he is so pleased with me. . . .'

On both sides the contentment was superficial. In Ruskin's busy mind was already germinating a new project, presently to take shape as 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture.' And when, after a visit to Oxford (where they attended parties with 'fine music and scientific pleasures such as looking at the circulation through a living Frog in a microscope') husband and wife embarked on a tour of the English cathedral cities, Effie learned that they were to be accompanied by old Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin. Effie was entirely normal and healthily energetic. John having caught cold, she was astonished at the tremulous anxiety displayed by both old people. 'If Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin would only let him alone . . .'. But to release their hold upon their ewe-lamb, their delicate and brilliant child, a man who had entered his thirtieth year but whom they still treated as an ailing youth to be guided and protected, was something that his parents neither would nor could do.

Did the pampered son really resent their authority? As an elderly man writing 'Praeterita,' he was to discuss their effect on his adult growth with considerable frankness. But, although he was aware of the bond, he did not during their life-time attempt to shake off his servitude; as early as 1848, it had begun to sap the foundations of his fragile relationship with Effie and to give an odd and disastrous turn to his whole emotional existence. 'You who are so kind as a son will be a perfect lover as a husband,' Effie had once written to him during their engagement; but in fact he was too devoted a son to take his place in her life either as a husband or a lover. For those who remain, as Ruskin remained, in an unnaturally retarded state of emotional development—held back by the claims of a possessive mother or father—there exists very often a disastrous dichotomy between real and ideal love. Of his love for the virginal, remote, child-like, unreal Effie, Ruskin's letters provide abundant proof. But the vision and the reality could not be

reconciled : he could not, when the moment came, translate romantic love into terms of adult passion. His marriage was never consummated ; and Effie, at first amused and distracted by the pleasures of her new position as the unusually appealing wife of a young and famous writer, grew gradually more bewildered and at length disillusioned and embittered.

It would be impossible here to retrace the story in all its details and its ramifications ; but extracts from the family correspondence help to mark the various stages of its tragi-comic progress. In August Ruskin and Effie, escorted by old Mr. Ruskin as far as Boulogne, set off on a tour of Normandy, to complete the material that John was assembling for ' *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*.' Effie, writing home, described her husband as ' quite in his element here and very happy ' ; but over-work had tired him and a letter of birthday-congratulations sent from Rouen to Effie's brother, George Gray, suggests that his private mood was comfortless and over-clouded :

You are still at an age when birthdays are not subjects of regret, though they may be sources of resolution. By the time that you are my age, I trust you will be better than I am—and have been more useful in your generation—my last ten years have passed like a fable—many of their days very happy, but I begin to find now the pain of looking back upon happiness which has been profitless. Your sister read to me your mother's account of your long walk from Blair Athol, it reminded me of many such happy wanderings of my own—now so far forgotten that I remember of them only that they *were* happy—while I cannot recover their details with distinctness enough to enjoy them again— Their only effect has been that of deadening my powers of present enjoyment. A life more laboriously spent is probably one far more gladdening in the retrospect—the animal spirit of the youth is given to him that he may not sink under its irksomeness—while it quickens his powers of after enjoyment of the reserved pleasures of more advanced age.

Meanwhile a somewhat acrimonious interchange had been taking place across the Channel between the Gray and Ruskin families. Letters hitherto unpublished make it possible to dismiss two suggestions frequently put forward by writers about Ruskin. It is not true that the marriage had been engineered by Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin, for we now know that they were reluctant to give their consent until it became clear that John was deeply and desperately enamoured. And it is equally untrue that Mr. Gray by his daughter's advantageous marriage hoped to benefit financially ; his financial affairs, at one time parlous, eventually recovered without assistance from the Ruskins. But not unnaturally he supposed that Mr. Ruskin might be willing to do him a small service, and he had asked the rich sherry-merchant

to help George, then a struggling clerk, to obtain employment in the City. Mr. Ruskin, however, refused, alleging that George as a clerk in London would be a source of social embarrassment to a famous brother-in-law and a fashionable sister. His reasoning he set forth in a tone of proud Podsnappery that Dickens himself could scarcely have improved on :

(Aug. 1, 1848)

The allusion to the Society my Son and your Daughter might move in might convey an impression of very absurd and very inordinate ambition—and the exclusiveness attached to it in relation to George might seem heartless and unkind but the facts are these. I happened to make my Son a Gentleman Commoner at Ch. Church Oxford—partly to increase the comforts of a youth in delicate Health—partly to see during my own Life how he would stand such an Ordeal—partly from the vanity of showing I would give my Son the best quality of Education I could get for Money and lastly because the Dean of Ch. church said I ought to do so. He conducted himself well—he was resolute in moderation, he was at once introduced to the highest men by two young noblemen whom he had met on his Travels—he showed Talent and got the prize for English Verse. He was invited to the Duke of Leinsters and many places he refused to go to—I have not named to any one, what Company he has kept since leaving College—but I was gratified to find him admitted to Tables of Ministers Ambassadors and Bishops but I was aware this arose from his having shown some knowledge in the fine Arts a subject chiefly interesting to the higher Classes—

. . . I deem this long History due to George, that he may comprehend my hinting the probability of a divided Society. It is not George alone but Mrs. Ruskin and my self are equally excluded. John has brought Lords to our Table but we are very marked in regarding them as John's Visitors and when Sir Wr. and Lady James last breakfasted here John and Effie presided and neither Mrs. R nor I ever appeared. I have got them their House in Park St. to be among their own Set—when they like to put up with Wine Merchants or Colonial Brokers they may dine here now and then—but I hope there is no undue pride in my desiring the young Couple to retain some hold of good Society.

Mr. Gray retired discomfited ; and the young people, having returned to their new house in Park Street, Grosvenor Square, continued to live up to old Mr. Ruskin's highest expectations. They entertained, and they were entertained. In December, at dinner with Sir Robert Inglis, Effie met

Macaulay and was impressed by the dazzling exuberance of his dinner-table conversation :

(Dec. 20, 1848)

... Mr. T. B. Macaulay sat opposite and he is quite a Lion at present from his very clever History from James II down that everyone is reading just now. I never heard such a man at conversation, he goes from St. Chrysostom's sermon at Antioch to the people not to pick each other's pockets in Church to M. Thiers speeches twenty years ago, gives them word for word, then back again to Greek Masoleums 4 Centuries B.C. gives you all the names of the people who built them cotemporary with the battle of Salamis, then to Seringapatam streets and mud houses and going at such a pace . . .

But at Christmas she fell ill—so ill that she was pronounced unfit to accompany John and his parents on a Swiss tour they had planned for the Spring months of 1849 ; and instead she was packed off north for a holiday at Bowerswell. Her illness was described as a 'nervous ailment.' Ruskin must have suspected its origin ; but, although he was himself tired and despondent, the old affection still persisted and, from Paris, he wrote to her in the familiar adoring strain :

(April 24, 1849)

I expect a line from my dearest love tomorrow at Sens ; Do you know, pet, it seems almost a dream to me that we have been married : I look forward to meeting you ; and to your *next* bridal night ; and to the time when I shall again draw your dress from your snowy shoulders : and lean my cheek upon them, as if you were still my betrothed only ; and I had never held you in my arms.

God bless you, my dearest.

Later he was to complain that his frivolous and self-willed wife had refused to share his interests. But this allegation is hardly borne out by a passage that occurs in a letter of May 3rd :

(May 3, 1849)

... I had nearly forgotten to ask you, love, whether it would be very irksome to you as you read Sismondi to note *every word* that bears in the remotest degree on the interests or history of Venice ? as I want to get at all the facts of Venetian history as shortly as I can, when I come home. Note *every man* who is a Venetian, wherever he appears : and make references to the places

distinctly in a little note book kept for the purpose. It will be a great assistance to me if you can do this.

Or by this reference, a week after, to her attempts at drawing :

(May 10, 1849)

. . . Do not vex yourself because the Raffaele drawing puzzles you—you happen just to have pitched upon the most difficult one of the whole set—because the closest in line : the one of Jacob and Rachel—of the finding of Moses, or of the blessing of Jacob would have been easy in comparison : but rather give the thing up than plague yourself about it : remember there is a great difference between pride and resolution : I think in *general* that not to give up a thing because we ‘*will not be beaten*’ has more of bulldog-ism in it than of sense . . . I should recommend—and would have done so at first, had I had time to write anything, that you should only copy from these pictures a feature here and there—a hand, foot—head—arm—bit of drapery—or of foliage—taking the easiest—that is to say that which has fewest lines, the first— Do not however think your time lost over the Abraham, as your hand will gain steadiness with every line you draw.

Yet the shadow on their relationship was slowly lengthening and deepening. Now that they had exclusive possession of their adored son, Mr. and Mrs. Ruskin ventured to make overt criticisms of Effie's character and conduct. His wife, they seem to have insinuated to John, was both secretive and intractable. They wished to help her ; but she would not be helped. ‘I often (wrote John to Effie) hear my mother or father saying poor child—if she could but have thrown herself openly upon us, and trusted in us, and felt that we desired only her happiness and would make her ours, how happy she might have been ; and how happy she might have made us all.’

Mr. Ruskin improved the occasion with a letter to Mr. Gray :

I address you again to repeat the expression of my sincere regret at the continuance of our daughter's bad state of health and further to inform you of the trouble we are all in from not knowing what should be done, if anything can be done on our part to bring about an amendment. It is evident to me that my son also suffers from not being able to make out what his wife's entire feelings and wishes are . . .

I excuse her in not being able to sympathise in many of his local attachments, they come from early association, and from peculiar pursuits. Ninety women out of a hundred would soon tire of this place and would prefer what I have heard Effie say, she would,

the flying over a desert on horseback, but I would expect from her great good sense and talent that she would see that her ambition, of which she has too much mind not to have good share, would be little gratified by her husband abandoning the haunt, where his genius finds food and occupation, to seek for stirring adventures, which might end in more mishap than profit. I am quite aware that his pursuits to ordinary people may appear absurd, but Effie is not one of these ordinary people . . .

If I might take the liberty of prescribing for her own comfort and amendment, I should urge an effort to be made to sacrifice everything to duty, to become interested and delighted in what her husband may be accomplishing by a short absence and to find a satisfaction in causing him no unnecessary anxiety that his faculties may be in full force for the purposes to which they are devoted . . .

On June 24th, John replied affectionately to a letter from Effie, in which she had expressed a pathetic desire to have children and lead a normal married life :

(June 24, 1849)

I have been thinking of you a great deal in my walks today, as of course I always do when I am not busy, but when I am measuring or drawing mountains, I forget myself—and my wife both ; if I did not I could not stop so long away from her : for I begin to wonder whether I am married at all, and to think of all my happy hours, and soft slumber in my dearest lady's arms, as a dream. I got a letter on Friday ; that in which you tell me you are better—thank God ; and that you would like a little Alice of our own. So should I ; a little Effie, at least. Only I wish they weren't so small at first that one hardly knows what one has got hold of.

Yet, ten days later, he wrote to her father, propounding his private theory that her reason was disordered :

. . . If she had not been seriously ill I *should* have had fault to find with her : but the state of her feelings I ascribe, now, simply to bodily weakness ; that is to say—and this is a serious and distressing admission—to a nervous disease affecting the brain.

I do not know when the complaint first showed itself : but the first that I saw of it was at Oxford after our journey to Dover : it showed itself then, as it does now, in tears and depression : being probably a more acute manifestation, in consequence of fatigue and excitement, of disease under which she had long been labouring. I have my own opinion as to its principal cause—but it does not

bear on matter in hand. I was not however, at the time, at all prepared to allow all I should have done for her state of health—and in consequence—when, some week or so afterwards, she for the first time showed causeless petulance towards my mother, I reproved her when we were alone. The matter in question was indeed one of very grave importance—being a wish on my mother's part that I should take a blue pill when I went to bed—the first case as far as I remember of 'interference' on her part since our marriage. It was however also the first time that Effie had heard herself blamed : and the effect upon her otherwise excited feelings was permanent—and disposed her—as I think, to look with jealousy upon my mother's influence over me. I was at this time very sufficiently vexed, for my own part—at not being able to get abroad—as well as labouring under severe cough—so that I was not able to cheer Effie or support her, just at the period when she began first to feel her changed position and lament her lost home. It was a sad time for her therefore altogether—and the mental and bodily illness were continually increased. No further unpleasantness however took place between her and my mother and we got abroad at last.

I had hoped that this would put us all to rights : but whether I overfatigued her in seeing Cathedrals—or whether we drank too much coffee at night—her illness continued to increase.

So she returned worse than she went and I am still in entire ignorance that there was anything particularly the matter with her.

The depression gained on her daily—and at last my mother, having done all she could to make her happy in vain, was, I suppose partly piqued and partly like myself—disposed to try more serious reason with her. Finding her one day in tears when she ought to have been dressing for dinner, she gave her a scold—which had she not been ill she would have deserved. Poor Effie dressed and came down—looking very miserable. I had seen her look so too often to take particular notice of it—and besides thought my mother right. Unluckily Dr. Grant was with us—and seeing Effie look ready to faint thought she must want his advice. I being thoroughly puzzled about the whole affair, thought so too and poor Effie, like a good girl as she is—took—to please me—what Dr. Grant would have her—weakened herself more—sank under the influenza—and frightened me at last very sufficiently—and heaven only knows now when she will forgive my mother. So far as I know then—these are the causes—and this was the progress—of her illness—and of the change of feeling towards my parents. You

know—better than I—what is likely now to benefit her—but I look forward with confidence to her restoration of health by simple physical means—and I am delighted to hear of the shower bath and the riding and the milk instead of tea—and the quiet. When I have her to manage again, I hope to do it better—and not to reason with—nor blame a physical weakness—which the course of time will, I doubt not, entirely cure. In all this, however, you will perceive that I look upon the thing as a purely medical question—not a moral one.

If Effie had in *sound mind* been annoyed by the contemptible trifles which have annoyed her : if she had cast back from her the kindness and affection with which my parents received her and refused to do her duty to them under any circumstances whatever but those of an illness bordering in many of its features on incipient insanity, I should not now have written you this letter respecting her . . .

I hope (he concluded) to see her outgrow with her girl's frocks that contemptible dread of interference and petulant resistance of authority which begins in pride and is nourished in folly and ends in pain. Restiveness I am accustomed to regard as unpromising character even in horses and asses.

This extraordinary communication, so oddly at variance with the gentleness and benignity assumed by most biographers to have been Ruskin's ruling traits, can only be described as both dishonest and insensitive. But still there was no open breach ; and soon after Ruskin's return from Switzerland at the end of August 1849 John and Effie left for Venice, where John passed five months of incessant activity gathering data for his new book. Effie meanwhile explored the city under proper chaperonage, attracting nevertheless the attention of amorous Venetian citizens and gallant Austrian officers—"they pass me and say "dear creature" and lots of things like that and throw bouquets at me.' But at home, alas, guerilla warfare had again broken out between the Grays and Ruskins. An anonymous letter was the immediate cause. This scurrilous missive, which asserted that a plot was on foot to separate John from his parents, old Mr. Ruskin forwarded to Mr. Gray, who replied, sensibly enough, suggesting it should be disregarded. Mr. Ruskin's acknowledgement of the suggestion was decidedly unhelpful :

(Oct. 29, 1849)

. . . There required no anonymous letter to suggest to Mrs. Ruskin and me that there seemed to be an amazing effort made to withdraw our son as much as possible from the influence and society of his parents. It was not the imagining this but the clear

perception of it which gave Mrs. Ruskin and myself uneasiness. Was it likely we should feel otherwise than hurt at seeing a creature who came to us so readily and as often as we asked her professing considerable attachment to us and appearing happy with us, at once change on becoming our daughter-in-law and evince a repugnance both to ourselves and to our house so marked that the French people who were here and who saw Effie, in place of staying to help Mrs. Ruskin with her visitors, hurry my son away from the house, gave expression to their sympathy by declaring they would become our children themselves. I would not go again into these matters but that you say you gave up your intention of visiting London when you saw John's affection for Effie was unchanged. It is singular that whilst you were fancying a want of proper feeling in John we were fearing the like in Effie, and as I speak to her as I write to you I told her the last day she was here that I almost feared she had taken my son to please somebody else because she left him so easily. I knew John's attachment was unshaken, but he had firmness of character enough not to become the altered man towards his parents which it was sought to make him—towards that mother especially to whom, under God, he was all that he now or ever will be.

Effie's attempts to persuade her husband to adopt a more independent attitude were evidently fore-doomed ; and, no sooner had they returned to Park Street, than John announced (Effie wrote to inform an English friend in Venice) that ' every morning after breakfast he is going to Denmark Hill to write and remain the whole day till six when he will return and dine with me. I endeavoured to point out that he might shut himself up in his study here and then I might see him sometimes during the day, but he says he has no light in town nor his Turners and that I will soon find acquaintances and can take care of myself (which I think you rather doubt).'

Still, she amused herself as best she might, dined out, attended parties and in May was presented at Court, where she observed that ' the Queen looked immensely stout and red but very calm. I kissed her hand which was fat and red too . . . ' Around the unattached beauty collected an enthusiastic circle of rakish men-of-the-world ; but she held these admirers at arm's length with considerable sang froid ; and, having rebuffed the assiduities of Clare Ford, a young and dissipated guardsman, she set about his reformation, advising him to save money, and to give up ' drinking Brandy with his coffee and smoking till three in the morning,' with the result that, as he seldom slept, he spent the midnight hours writing long and grateful letters ' on the fallen Nature of Man and his weakness . . . most strange productions' :

till a friend told her that her house in Park Street should be re-named 'The Reform Club.'

Inevitably there was some gossip; but, she assured her mother, the gossip was unjustified '... I am so peculiarly situated as a married woman that being left much alone and most men thinking that I live quite alone I am more exposed to their attentions. But I assure you—I never allow such people to enter the house and stop everything of the kind which might be hurtful to my reputation...' Clare Ford had accepted his congé: he joined the Diplomatic Service and, later, made his mark as British Ambassador at Constantinople, Madrid and Rome. A new interest was emerging: Ruskin had met and constituted himself the literary champion of John Everett Millais.

The appearance of this handsome and compulsive figure—a man as warm-blooded and direct as John was cool, elusive, complicated—did not, in spite of the popular legend, destroy the Ruskins' marriage. Millais would appear to have behaved throughout with Tennysonian chivalry; and Effie, conscious that her husband's parents would have liked nothing better than to catch her in a false position, and latterly suspicious that her husband himself was aiding and abetting them, evinced uncommon good sense during the stormy years that followed. In the winter of 1851, the Ruskins re-visited Venice; and on their return they removed from Park Street, where to old Mr. Ruskin's loudly expressed dismay they had over-spent their income, and set up in a house that the old people had chosen in their own suburban neighbourhood, 'a small, ugly red-brick house,' No. 29 Herne Hill. Here John finished the second and third volumes of 'Stones of Venice.' Finally, during the summer of 1853, Millais and his brother, William, accompanied John and Effie on holiday to Scotland. They spent three months at Glenfilas; and while Millais painted his celebrated portrait of Ruskin, poised pensive and sandy-whiskered above a foaming Highland cascade, he remarked with stupefaction his friend's extraordinary lack of interest in a young and seductive wife, 'his hopeless apathy, in everything regarding her happiness.' During the December of that same year, he summed up his impressions in a letter to Mrs. Gray:

(Dec. 21, 1853)

I am afraid my answer to your kind and judicious letter was dreadfully incoherent, but now I will endeavour to reply more satisfactorily—Although you know John Ruskin's odd propensity for roaming away by himself from all human creatures and their habitations, yet you cannot be aware of the abstracted way in which he neglects his wife—It is utterly impossible for a friend to sojourn with them for any length of time, without absolutely

being compelled in common courtesy to attend to her— I assure you that Ruskin only expressed approval and delight at perceiving that your daughter and myself agreed so well together, and when *I spoke to him about his extraordinary indifference to her attractions* (which could not be but excessively unpleasing, and conducive to her unhappiness) he only apathetically laughed and said, he thought all women ought to depend upon themselves for engrossing employment, and such like cold inhuman absurdities— There was something so revolting to me about this sickly treatment of her just cause of complaint and discontent, that I never again ventured to speak on the subject, as I could not depend upon keeping my temper.

Mrs. Gray in December also received a letter from her mysterious son-in-law :

I will write you a word of Effie's health ; but I fear I shall have little cheering information to give you. She passes her days in melancholy, and nothing can help her but an entire change of heart.

Back in London, Effie had been joined by a younger sister, Sophie, a precocious child of ten, to whom both Ruskin and his parents seem to have spoken with unbecoming freedom ; and at the close of February Effie wrote to her mother :

He has told Sophie that he watches everything I do or say therefore it is impossible I can talk about anything that comes uppermost— I do not know what on earth they are such fools for especially John as were it not for the pain of exposure I have him most completely in my power. I must tell you all these things just to show you how impossible any behaviour is to help things straight for all our sakes when their object is to get rid of me, to have John altogether with them again, at any price they are resolved to do this, but they seem to wish if possible to disgust me to such a degree as to force me—or else get me—into some scrape— John has been trying again to get me by taunts to write to Millais—

But Millais was on his guard. He would be ' more careful than ever,' he wrote to Mrs. Gray, and gave it as his opinion that, if Effie's health were to be saved, ' some steps should be speedily taken to protect her from this incessant harassing behaviour of the Rs.' But Effie's powers of resistance were exhausted. At last, on March 7th, 1854, advised by her friend Lady Eastlake, she wrote a long letter to her father, appealing for his help and telling him without reservation the story of her marriage.

Yet, still afraid of what the Ruskins might do—she had by this time begun to regard them with almost superstitious horror—Effie did not warn John that she wished or meant to leave him. When she set out from London with Mrs. Gray on April 25th, Ruskin, who suspected nothing, accompanied them to the station; but on the same day she wrote to her mother-in-law, returning her wedding ring and her account books, and explaining the circumstances that made continued life with John impossible. Ruskin weathered the crisis calmly. 'Be assured (he told a friend) I shall neither be subdued, nor materially changed, by this matter. The worst of it for me had long been past.' Later that year, his friendship with Millais was summarily wound up. Ruskin addressed him from Denmark Hill on December 11th when the portrait begun in Scotland was at length completed and framed:

We have just got the picture placed—in I think the very light it wants—or rather—for it cannot be said to want any light—in that which suits it best. I am far more delighted with it now than I was when I saw it in your room. As for the wonderment of the painting there can of course be no question—but I am also gradually getting reconciled to the figures in the way. On the whole the thing is *right* and what can one say more—always excepting the yellow flower and the over large spark in the right eye, which I continue to reprobate—as having the effect of making me slightly squint—which whatever the other faults of my face may be—I believe I don't. My father and mother say the likeness is perfect—but that I look bored—pale—and a little too yellow. Certainly after standing looking at that row of chimnies in Gower Street for three hours—on one leg—it was no wonder I looked rather uninterested in the world in general. But the more they look at it the more they come to it. Please send me your proper address, as I may often want to write to you now. I need not, I hope, tell you how grateful I am to you for finishing this picture as you have.

Faithfully and gratefully yours

J. RUSKIN.

Millais replied after the passage of a week:

My address is Langham Chambers, Langham Place, but I can scarcely see how you conceive it possible that I can desire to continue on terms of intimacy with you. Indeed I concluded that after finishing your portrait you yourself would have seen the necessity of abstaining from further intercourse.

The barrier which cannot but be between us *personally* does not

prevent me from sympathising with all your efforts to the advancement of good taste in Art, and heartily wishing them success.

To which Ruskin responded two days later :

SIR,

From the tenour of your letter, received yesterday, I can only conclude that you either believe I had, as has been alleged by various base or ignorant persons, some unfriendly purpose when I invited you to journey with me in the Highlands, or that you have been concerned in the machinations which have for a long time been entered into against my character and fortune. In either case I have to thank you for a last lesson, though I have had to learn many and bitter ones, of the possible extent of human folly and ingratitude. I trust that you may be spared the natural consequences of the one, or the dire punishment of the other.

I remain,

Your obed^t serv^t,

JOHN RUSKIN.

A Decree of Nullity having been granted to 'Euphemia Chalmers Gray falsely called Ruskin' on July 15th, 1854, Effie was married to Millais at Bowerswell on July 3rd, 1855. Her married life was happy, and she became the mother of eight children.

Ruskin she was never to meet again : but that their association had a momentous sequel is now revealed by papers in the Millais archives. It is well known that, during the year 1858, Ruskin was introduced to a certain Mrs. La Touche, the wife of an Irish banker, of Harristown, Kildare, and through her became acquainted with her nine-year-old daughter, Rose, an unusually beautiful and oddly serious child. Soon Ruskin had begun to fasten upon Rose all his hopes of future happiness. In 1860, he informed a friend that he could love no one 'except my Mouse-pet in Ireland who nibbles me to the very sick-death with weariness to see her.' When she was eighteen, he proposed marriage, but was told that, for an answer, he must wait till she was twenty-one. At twenty-one, she postponed her decision. Two years later, he proposed again and was then definitely rejected. Rose was undoubtedly attached to Ruskin : her mother was a close friend. What induced them to deal him a blow from which his emotional equilibrium never quite recovered? Hitherto no biographer has produced a satisfactory explanation ; and it has even been suggested that Mrs. La Touche was personally jealous of Ruskin's devotion to her daughter. The problem has now been solved. In October 1870, Mrs. La Touche wrote to Effie Millais, stating that a Mr. and Mrs. Cowper Temple were attempting to influence

Rose in Ruskin's favour. They were repeating Ruskin's account of his marriage, according to which the betrothal to Effie had been arranged by his parents : he had respected his wife too much to proceed to consummation : their interests and tastes were incompatible : but he had done his utmost, and employed every means, to make her happy. Fifteen years had gone by : but Effie emerged from the past like an avenging spirit. Her reply was as follows :

I have received your kind letter and I am truly distressed that you are in such trouble about your daughter.

Mr. Millais is extremely averse to my being brought into contact even by correspondence with your daughter who, if she is still under the mischievous influence of Mr. Ruskin, will not think differently whatever I say.

If your daughter can for a moment believe such a statement as his that he should marry a girl of 19 without professions of the most devoted kind, how can any words of mine undeceive her.

He pursued exactly the same course with me as with her ; he always took the tone of his love and adoration being higher and above that of ordinary mortals, and immediately after the ceremony he proceeded to inform me that he did not intend to marry me. He afterwards excused himself from doing so by saying that I had an internal disease. His father tried to induce him to believe me insane and his whole conduct was simply as monstrous as his present statements are perfect falsehoods.

Our marriage was *never* arranged by anybody. There was no inducement but the utmost determination on his part to marry me. Prior to his professions to me he had been devoted to a Spanish lady and broke a blood vessel from disappointment that he did not get her. I do not think she wished it but religion was given as the obstacle.

But he had quite got over that and on our visiting her years after he had no feeling about her.

Now that I am a married woman and happy with a family I think his conduct can only be excused on the score of madness, as his wickedness in trying his dreadful influence over your daughter is terrible to think of.

I can easily understand the hold he has acquired, as it was exactly the same over myself. His conduct to me was impure in the highest degree, discreditable, and so dishonourable that I submitted to it for years not knowing what else to do, although I would have often been thankful to have run away, and envied the people sweeping the crossings.

His mind is most inhuman ; all that sympathy which he expects and gets from the female mind it is utterly impossible for him to return excepting on artistic subjects which have nothing to do with domestic life. It is perfect falsehood to say that I did not agree with his pursuits. No one more so. He not only gave me the opportunity but the means of education when abroad for acquiring knowledge of painting, sculpture, architecture, every branch of the fine arts, a slight knowledge of Latin and Greek, and we read together the works of the ancients and, as I am particularly fond of history, every thing he wanted for his writings of this kind.

From his peculiar nature he is utterly incapable of making a woman happy. He is quite unnatural and in that one thing all the rest is embraced.

He always pretended to me to the last that he was the purest and holiest of men and he had a peculiar influence over a young mind in making himself believed.

I had no idea I could get away up to within a month of leaving him, which I did under the care of my parents and entirely without his knowledge by the advice of lawyers. So far from his conniving at my leaving him it was a great shock to them all ; this statement of his is also entirely false.

He once years before offered me £800 a year to allow him to retire into a monastery and retain his name—that I declined. He was then under the influence of Manning.

I think if your daughter went through the ceremony with him that her health would give way after a time and she would be submitted to the same kind of treatment as I was.

It is very painful for to write all this and be again obliged to recall all those years of distress and suffering, of which I nearly died. But I hope that your daughter may be saved and come to see things in a different light.

This letter had a decisive effect. Rose finally broke with Ruskin. Already consumptive, she gradually drifted into depths of religious melancholy, and by the spring of 1875 Ruskin knew that she was dying. To Carlyle he wrote that he had just finished his notes on an exhibition at the Royal Academy, 'and was away into the meadows, to see clover and bean blossom, when the news came that the little story of my Wild Rose was ended, and the hawthorn blossoms would fall this year—over her.' In 1878 he experienced his first attack of madness. Effie died on December 23rd, 1897 : Ruskin on January 21st, 1900.

Kubla Khan in Wales

Hafod and the Devil's Bridge

BY GEOFFREY GRIGSON

Illustrated by John Piper

Carved near each other in the slate of the Robbers' Cave by the bottom fall of the Mynach are 'Bob and Kit, Aug. 1942.' and 'R. Whitter Aug^t. 22 1799.' The rocks, underneath, edges upward like a pack of cards, are smoothed by more than a hundred and fifty years of feet clambering and slipping after the Sublime and the Picturesque. Guide book after guide book copies the sublime detail recorded by Benjamin Heath Malkin, William Blakes's friend, after his two excursions into South Wales in 1803. Visitor after visitor climbs up the ladder of steps from the Robbers' Cave back to the genteel hotel, the Victorian Swiss chalet built over the falls, and everlastingly within their noise; or walks back from the hotel terrace, and crosses the Devil's Bridge, and goes to the Youth Hostel.

R. Whitter in 1799—no doubt when the August rain waved in its usual long curtains up the gorge—had dug himself precisely into the slate. He had edged his lettering with regularity and elegance, as one—whoever he was—within the culture of his age. Bob and Kit and many more have scribbled shallow and untidy letters; then scrambled quickly up again toward the terrace. And those whose gentility has been so Ruskinised that, unlike Virgil, they would not think of putting their name on a tree, or a fence, or a rock, scramble out of the gorge to their cars after just as hasty and automatic an obedience to the decayed imperatives of the sublime. How do they *feel* this Xanadu landscape, where the hills do not so much seem to be high, as the valleys preternaturally deep, cut down below the natural, likely level for valleys?

Over in the next valley, less visited and certainly, if that is the word, less appreciated, are the moving relics of the man who generously pushed the Devil's Bridge and the Falls of the Rheidol and the Mynach into the world's eye. In Colonel Johnes's day, visitors penetrated to Hafod either by way of Aberystwith and the Devil's Bridge, or else up the mountain pass from Rhayader, down into Cwm Ystwith, over the bridge designed, with its coat of arms, by Baldwin of Bath, under the black declivities of slate, under the vast black and brown lead workings and the dirty hovels of the

miners, women and men. At last, shuddering still from the barren horror of the pass and the mines, the travellers in the chaise found that all of a sudden the road before them opened upon 'such an assemblage of beauty and grandeur, stretched out to the very limits of the perspective, as few spots in this island can equal for surprise and singularity.' The sides of beauty and grandeur, the sides of the valley were planted with three million trees. In the midst of them Hafod House and grounds, the church by Wyatt (who built Fonthill for Beckford), the model farm, the obelisk to the great 'improver of our National Agriculture,' the Duke of Bedford; and, in the flower garden on a rocky ledge ('to which strangers are never admitted') were no doubt the Colonel and Mrs. Johnes, with their only child—it was known as Miss Johnes's garden—entertaining Turner, or Fuseli, or Stothard, or Mr. Malkin. There they were seated, among the curious shrubs, in the moss-house, or near the stone vase by Banks in which was the dust of Miss Johnes's pet robin, and on the pedestal of which was, and still is, the robin's epitaph written by another guest, Mr. Samuel Rogers, 'to commemorate a domestic circumstance.'

At present Colonel Johnes occupies a very odd position. With a frown, his scorched marble head, separated from his body, is tucked under the remains of a marble settee in the church just up above the garden. His valley was ill-wished by fire. The first outbreak was sometime before 1803, and attacked the model farm. The second fire, in 1807, on Friday the thirteenth of March, was attributed by Mrs. Johnes 'to the careless use of a warming pan, in the house-keeper's chamber.' It destroyed the mansion, destroyed 'Thetis dipping Achilles in the Styx' by Banks, destroyed the antique bust of Isis in red granite, destroyed the 'petrification found in the old bed of the Nile,' destroyed furniture, tapestries, the Welsh manuscripts, the collection of medieval romances, the translations of Froissart printed on his own press by Colonel Johnes, destroyed all the rest of all the treasures of the great octagonal library with its copper dome, and its gallery carried on Doric pillars and variegated marble. 'From the period of the destruction of the Alexandrian Library, no greater loss, perhaps, has befallen literature than the conflagration at Hafod.' The third fire, the fire-bug of the valley still unsatisfied, burnt the church in 1932, burnt Fuseli's altar-piece, and Chantrey's marble group which had figured Johnes and Mrs. Johnes leaning over the death-couch of their daughter. The bits—Colonel Johnes and his frown and so on—are gathered together and locked behind a church-furniture, fumed oak screen awaiting an impossible restoration, Johnes him-

self died in his romantic villa at Dawlish, and was taken back to be buried here in the church, sharing his daughter's vault.

Below, between the church and the Ystwith, 'which rushes through the valley in the most pleasingly irregular lines,' half of the Gothic mansion which Baldwin rebuilt for Johnes is still there (inside it, still, one of Johnes's pictures which was too big even to be sold). Alongside, crushing what remains of Baldwin's work, are the campanile and unfinished shell of a later, larger Italianate palace. Up on the rock, the obelisk to the Duke of Bedford now begins to gape, and to fall apart, stone by stone. The vase and Rogers's epitaph below take some finding under the over-growth of Miss Johnes's deserted and once so private garden; and below again, across one of the long drives, on the edge of the Ystwith, is concealed the wilderness of the Garden of Eden. The gates of Eden are gone. The ornamental gateways of artificial stone are cracking and falling. The serpent fountain has been smashed. The air is the decadent, mossy, lichenous, leafy-mouldy, acid air of a riverside swamp; and a gloom of rotting, huge laurels, black trunks and arms criss-crossing, leaning, sagging, chokes the whole area between the gateways and the immense cedar tree. The cedar, the name and the nature of the garden remind one that in this valley, within this wilderness, Milton upon Paradise, interpreted by Horace Walpole as Milton upon modern gardening, had been inspiringly at work: ' . . . the savage but respectable terror with which the poet guards the bounds of his Paradise, fenced

. . . with the champain head
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
Access denied; and overhead upgrew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
Cedar and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
A sylvan scene, and as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view.'

Somewhere in this gloom, in this ruination of Eden, was the Doric temple, which I could not discover, copied out of Stuart's *Athens*. The movement of that line of Milton's beginning 'A sylvan scene'—pause, and a longish pause before it goes on—what other movement, what other line of what other poem does it recall, if not, in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*:

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover?

The savage place—'that deep romantic chasm'—ran down, also, across 'a cedarn cover.' In fact, I wonder if *Kubla Khan*, dreamt under opium in the Exmoor farmhouse, was not a poem in whose creation Hafod had been an element, with Colonel Johnes as the Khan, and the valley as the Xanadu in which Colonel Johnes had so newly built his 'stately pleasure-dome'; and with the rushing Ystwith as the secret river Alph flung up at once and ever among the dancing rocks of the valley?

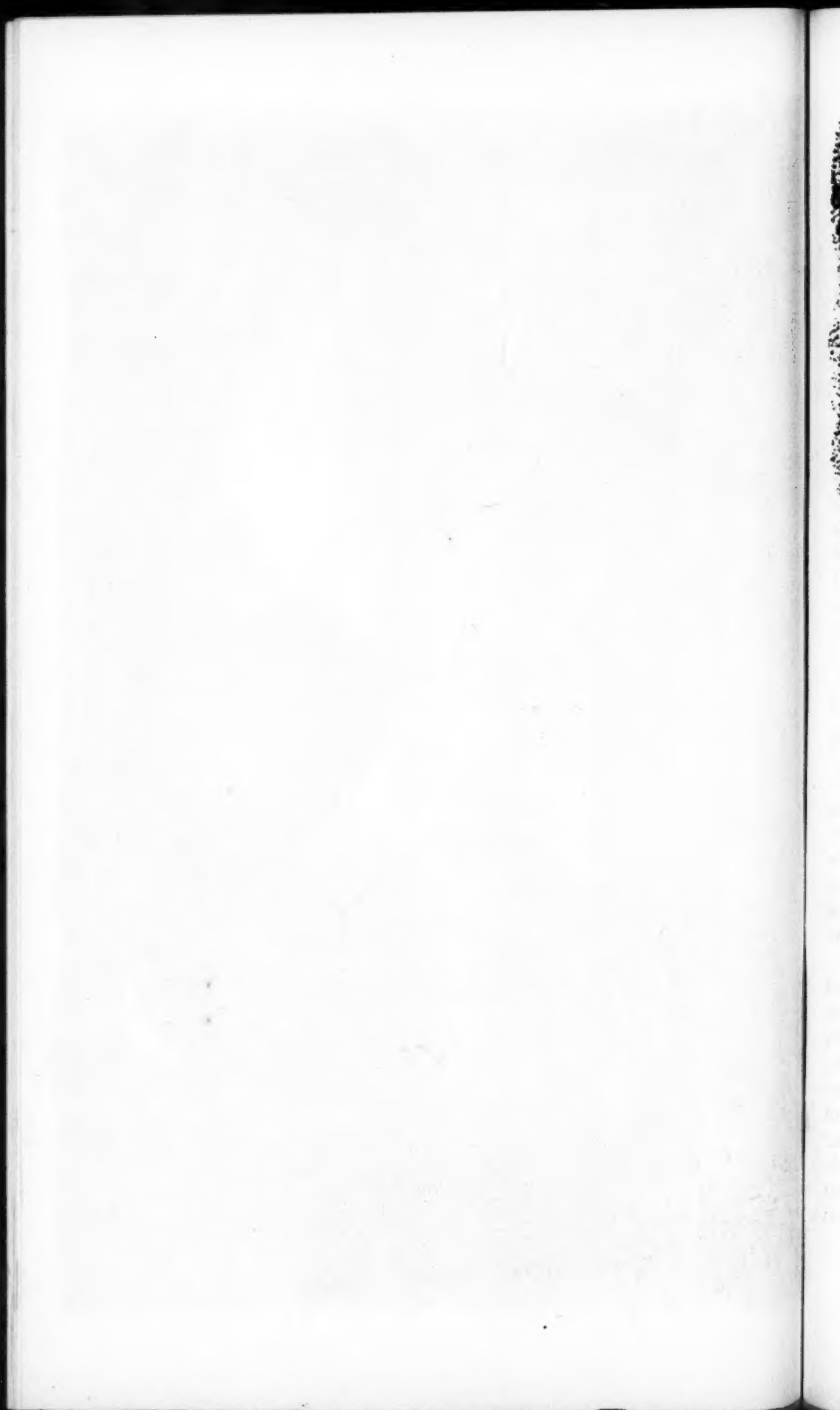
To press it too far might be like Father Knox's demonstration, by internal cypher, that Queen Victoria wrote *In Memoriam*; but look at least at the possibilities. In 1794, four years before the dreaming of *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge and John Hucks and two other friends had walked through North Wales, Coleridge (with a five-foot walking stick in his hand) in a mood of romance and sublimities. On the way to Bala he had felt the 'immense and rugged clefts in the mountains, which in winter must form cataracts most tremendous; now there is just enough sun-glittering water dashed down over them to soothe, not disturb the ear.' He spoke, in that same letter, of 'wandering among the wild-wood scenery and terrible graces of the Welsh mountains.' On July 29th, the walkers reached Aberystwith. They came up to the Devil's Bridge and penetrated 'with infinite labour and fatigue,' so Hucks wrote, '... to the bottom of the glen, or chasm.' In his skeleton account, 'A Pedestrian Tour Through North Wales' (1795) Hucks does not indeed mention that they saw Hafod. But they did take the road from the Devil's Bridge to Tregaron, which crosses the Ystwith, and goes right past Hafod's main gateway. Coleridge cannot, one would believe, have come so close to so celebrated a place of enchantment without walking in to see it, if only for a short time, as an interlude before the ten last miles to Tregaron. For certain Hafod would have called to him as it did to Wordsworth, who explored its recesses twice. And Coleridge might again have visited Hafod in May, or thereabouts, of 1798, the probable year of *Kubla Khan*, when he and Wordsworth travelled at least as near as Brecon, to see Thelwall in his farm-house. In 'The Road to Xanadu' Livingston Lowes showed how reminiscences of that earlier Welsh tour contributed to *The Ancient Mariner*. Coleridge wrote *Kubla Khan* soon after *The Ancient Mariner*, and recollections of a tour that helped the one may well have helped the other, the more so if his memories of Hafod were revived only a few weeks before the farmhouse dream. Lowes linked all those elements of Coleridge's reading which coalesced into the poem, the details, the actual words, from Purchas, from Bartram's 'Travels,' from

also,
can't
those
the
had
thing
among

tion,
but
the
other
five-
sub-
and
tracts
water
oke,
nery
the
idge
rote,
unt,
does
the
the
idge
ed a
or a
For
rth,
have
r of
r as
to
that
dge
ons
the
eks
s of
ills,
om









Bruce's 'Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile,' from Maurice's 'History of Hindostan,' Rennell's 'Memoir of a Map of Hindostan,' and Bernier's 'Voyage to Surat.' He connected Coleridge's Mount Abora with Milton's Mount Amara in *Paradise Lost*; but he forgot, as he had not entirely forgotten in tackling *The Ancient Mariner*, that poets have eyes, that poets do not only compose from reading, that Coleridge was a keen collector of visual impressions from the lichens on a stone to the glowing blood-red ice of Ratzeburg lake. There is no doubting, even now in its decadence, the visual effect of Hafod, the visual effect of what, with historical reason, one can call this creation out of *Paradise Lost*. In between Coleridge's probable first and his possible second visit, the Bristol dilettante George Cumberland, in 1796, published his 'Attempt to Describe Hafod': He came to a point which commanded the whole valley, and wrote, 'The impression this view made upon my mind is *indelible*; yet I saw it without any advantageous concomitants. What then must be the effects of sunshine—vapours—autumnal foliage—a fine aurora—or a clear moonlight! what in the language of Ossian, "When the blast has entered the womb of the mountain-cloud and scattered its curling gloom around," for here on this globose promontory, a bard might indeed sit, and draw all his fine images from nature!' Thomas Green, in 1799, had 'burst suddenly upon Hafod House and grounds, in a deep hollow richly mantled with wood, the Ystwith flowing through it—a scene of enchantment amidst this barren waste' ('Extracts from the Diary of a Lover of Literature,' 1810). Sir J. E. Smith, of the Linnaean Society, though enamoured of the lichens of Hafod and the 'rich harvest' they afforded to 'the cryptogamic botanist,' felt the enchantment in 1796, saw the waterfall near the house 'illuminated by the blue silvery splendour of the fireworks, called Bengal lights,' and noted how 'the scale of the country is so grand, that the real house, though of very ample dimensions, looks like a summer house.'

So many elements of the poem are there in fact in Hafod and Johnes's fantastic work. There in the valley he had decreed his pleasure dome. There, at Hafod, girdled around with eight miles of walling, were Johnes's gardens, caves, river, chasm, forests, hills, sunny spots of greenery—even (if it is not pushing the matter absurdly) an ice-house. So I should add to Lowes's account of the springs of *Kubla Khan*, not only Milton's 'steep wilderness,' his 'cedar' and 'A sylvan scene'; but the possible, probable vision of Hafod, which this romantic Khan, this man of great wealth, grandiose in his notions like Beckford, had so lately and so

excessively begun to develop. Of course, I might also add that Coleridge's Exmoor farmhouse as well was in a neighbourhood of chasms; dark-shadowed, rock-rough, enormous chasms, which move slowly down to the often smooth, reflective lifeless ocean of the Bristol Channel.

Yet what is of more concern than whether, and to what degree, Hafod was transmuted into Xanadu, is the contrast of Milton's God-made Paradise and proceeding from it, Colonel Johnes's man-made Paradise; that contrast, and, as well, the parallel of the fate of Hafod and the warning with which Coleridge's visionary fragment comes to an end. Johnes's dome in his Welsh Xanadu, like the Khan's, like the counterpart Coleridge would build with music, was a dome of pleasure, pleasure among savagery; it was insubstantial, deathly, and condemned, as Fonthill, from the very start. And savagery has reclaimed Johnes's Xanadu; a development, a decay as consequent upon extreme romanticism in action, as in feeling and in art—

And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Towards the end of his note-book of 1795-1798 Coleridge jotted down, in between his pieces about alligators and crocodiles, this note: 'Some wilderness-plot, green and fountainous and unviolated by man.' Hafod was a wilderness-plot, was green, and was fountainous; but was not unviolated. Johnes's goodness as a man saved neither himself, his collections, his family, nor Hafod. And how curiously the three fires, the early death of the young daughter, the burnt head of Colonel Johnes, the speckling stumps of his millions of trees, how curiously they give a heavier line to the whole fatality!

Going back to Hafod—in fact, as Hafod is now, going back to those gloomy remnants of the special walled Garden of Eden, I mentioned caves; and across from the Garden, across the Alph, or the Ystwith, there is, up a side valley, at least a more durable relic of æsthetic extravagance driven into the mountain. It is a tunnel cut through the rock perhaps by the Cwm Ystwith miners, to give, in a solemnity of noise and rushing of wet wind, a sudden, dark, glittering view, from behind, of a waterfall, which is otherwise almost invisible in its dell. 'None but the adventurous mountain shepherd had probably beheld it, till Mr. Johnes conceived the happy idea of piercing the hill by an artificial cavern.' Stothard, on a visit to Hafod in 1805, painted the waterfall from

within the tunnel ; and more recently (as you may see) it has been drawn by John Piper. But all around, above the waterfall, all over the mountain sides, even around the house itself, the three million trees and their descendants have, as I say, been felled—felled—felled, as far as it was profitable. The valley slopes are speckled with the white stumps, the lawns are slashed by the timber sledges.

It was Colonel Johnes, of course, who had had Baldwin's bridge, with the family arms, built over the Ystwith at the entrance to Xanadu ; Colonel Johnes who put iron railing to make the second



of the Devil's Bridges safe (it is now covered by a third modern bridge of steel girders). It was Colonel Johnes who built the Hafod Arms—later on enlarged and remodelled in 1849—for the convenience of visitors to Hafod and the falls of Rheidol and the Mynach ; but now the energy of his tasteful romantic impulses, social, political, æsthetic, are as precisely dead as the dead click of the turnstiles leading to the Falls or the glitter of the post cards on sale near the Youth Hostel.

Yet nostalgia, or the melancholy pleasure of decay, or *sic transit gloria mundi* are not the right sentiments for seeing, painting or writing about Hafod. Of course, one may regret an elaborated code of natural beauty once vigorously acted upon. But the

æsthetic was only an æsthetic ; it lacked the possibilities for glory. Johnes, in a speech of his noted by Coleridge, told the lazy, Munich-minded aldermen of the City of London that with their fat, if he came, Napoleon would grease the wheels of his triumphal chariot. One can neither think of that speech, nor look at his gardens, nor compare the names written in the Robbers' Cave, on what, so long ago, was Colonel Johnes's estate, nor look down on his calcined head and perplexed frown in Hafod Church (so tastefully redecored), nor contemplate, for example, a castle stripped of its ivy and turnstiled and regulated and preserved by the Office of Works, without feeling—well, without feeling the senile mummery and final wriggles of an age maturing already when the first acorn of millions was pushed into the ground at Hafod.

A Henry James Jubilee. II

BY S. GORLEY PUTT

III

If, in *The Princess Casamassima*, there are pain, pathos, evocative twinges of childhood and adolescence, flashes of intuition in the private and public impressions of a neurotic youth, in *The Bostonians* there are all these things plus passion pure and simple, passion of the kind we mean when we talk about (usually without having read) *Wuthering Heights*. It is one of the most powerful novels in our language ; that it is not generally recognised as such can only be due to a general conspiracy (headed, one supposes, by the author himself) to hide or disguise the central theme.

The Bostonians bears a striking resemblance to *The Princess Casamassima* in certain matters of tone and in the evocation of that strained human anguish of the conflict between the conception of a 'political' ideal and its execution in the face of contrary 'private' impulses. The impression of both books that remains most vividly in the reader's mind is just this strained grey quality of the prose—relieved, it must be admitted, by some amazing 'set-pieces' of character-drawing. Not even in the later novels, I believe, did Henry James so demonstrate his power to introduce into the very texture of his writing all the tension of his characters as they 'slash out in the bewilderment' of the contrast between life as a conscious political effort towards an attitude, and life as a more complex and aching system of personal desires and denials which may run, if not in direct opposition to the conscious will, at least in a direction oblique enough to cause a harsh grating of responses.

In both novels, the subtler tension in the central character is made more easy to appreciate by the placing, as an immediate background, of some more overt but not quite crude instance of a similar unsteadiness of purpose. To set off the social perplexities of Hyacinth Robinson, striving to rise from poverty to the *haute monde* against his conviction that the *haute monde* should be destroyed, we have noted the less complicated social urge of the Princess Casamassima, striving to climb down in the other direction to satisfy a passing whim ; there is also the more active revolutionary zeal of Paul Muniment and his friends, which is itself somewhat

tangled with personal implications and is thrown into relief by the more mature (if less precise) commentary of Anastasius Vetch and Pinnie. So here, in *The Bostonians*, the conflict in the mind of Olive Chancellor is thrown against the background of a much less complicated instance in the person of Miss Birdseye, the true Bostonian reformer.

It is worth noting the extraordinary tenderness of the portrait of Miss Birdseye, from the very beginning. We are enabled, with the author, to see courage and honest value in the dim drapery of a foolish old woman fumbling in a muddle-headed way with causes beyond her scope. Her detailed portrait, that great set-piece framed in a description of her apartments all prepared for yet another meeting in aid of some good cause, is one of the finest passages of Henry James's early maturity. It overflows with adjectives, but there is no straining after effect: the adjectives tumble out as though the author is quite saturated with his 'appreciation' of her:

She was a little old lady, with an enormous head; that was the first thing Ransom noticed—the vast, fair, protuberant, candid, ungarnished brow, surmounting a pair of weak, kind, tired-looking eyes, and ineffectually balanced in the rear by a cap which had the air of falling backwards, and which Miss Birdseye suddenly felt for while she talked, with unsuccessful irrelevant movements. She had a sad, soft, pale face, which (and it was the effect of her whole head) looked as if it had been soaked, blurred, and made vague by exposure to some slow dissolvent. The long practice of philanthropy had not given accent to her features; it had rubbed out their transitions, their meanings. The waves of sympathy, of enthusiasm, had wrought upon them in the same way in which the waves of time finally modify the surface of old marble busts, gradually washing away their sharpness, their details. In her large countenance her dim little smile scarcely showed. It was a mere sketch of a smile, a kind of instalment, or payment on account; it seemed to say that she would smile more if she had time, but that you could see, without this, that she was gentle and easy to beguile.

It is interesting to note that the author, struck 'deadly sick' when his brother William wrote a letter accusing him of painting in Miss Birdseye a recognisable portrait of the respected Bostonian philanthropist Miss Peabody, categorically stated¹ that 'Miss Birdseye was evolved entirely from my moral consciousness, like every other person I have ever drawn.' He goes on to claim that 'though subordinate, she is, I think, the best figure in the book,'

¹ *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 115.

and—which is more to our present purpose—‘she is represented as the embodiment of pure, the purest philanthropy.’

But tender though the portrait is, it is important to recognise in Miss Birdseye a kindly example of those professional reformers who, deep in magnanimous schemes for ‘foreigners’ and others with whom they have no valid individual contact, fail entirely to establish for themselves any true personal relationship with the world and with their fellows: a judgment summed up in the observation that the legend of an *affaire* between Miss Birdseye and a Hungarian refugee must have been apocryphal because ‘it was open to grave doubt that she could have entertained a sentiment so personal.’ This manner of life, however kindly displayed in the person of Miss Birdseye, clearly represents to the author a fatal error in the investment of emotional capital—and this manner of life is what Olive Chancellor wished to persuade herself was admirable. Her tragedy is greater than that of Miss Birdseye, not because her sense of values was any less mistaken, but simply because she was unable to pursue her mistaken course with anything like success. Temperament and history alike had aided Miss Birdseye, so that her eccentricity took on, at the last, an aura of honesty and integrity, and made her possibly as happy as she could ever have been in any other mode of life. But with Olive, the personal heresy which she strove to dampen down by denying herself any relations with men (an unsympathetic tribe represented by her cousin Basil Ransom) and devoting herself single-mindedly to Women’s Rights, flared up again with a terrible intensity in her love for Verena Tarrant, flared up inside and destroyed the very holy sanctuary of their mutual and vowed devotion to an impersonal ‘cause.’

With Miss Birdseye fresh in the mind, and before engaging the main characters, it is convenient to draw attention to another instance of James’s detached sympathy in the delineation of minor figures, introduced in *The Bostonians* (as so often elsewhere) in a series of sketches to the splendid *economy* of which his long sentences and inflated periphrasis so oddly and actively contribute. It is a quality of tone to be seen to great advantage in the gentle ironical humour of the portraits of Selah Tarrant the mesmeric healer and his wife, daughter of Abraham Greenstreet the Abolitionist. It comes out in a kind of amused outrage at their pathetic poverty of taste, their shoddy system of pretences and makeshifts. One doesn’t in the least resent the narrator’s tone of superiority: one *has* to feel superior to such fry, if one is to make anything of them at all, and there is a caressing humour about it all which never

declines into a snigger. Underneath, one is always conscious of a deep human sympathy, a beautiful apprehension of the tortured twists and quirks producing all this amazing corrugation of personality. The portrait of Verena Tarrant's mother, admirable in itself, has much functional significance. It helps to explain the girl's willingness to leave home in order to live as Olive Chancellor's guest, it certainly provides her with an incentive for her final desertion of 'public life' for a private career as Mrs. Basil Ransom, and it offers, in its very tone and texture, another clear indication of the author's disapproval of those who allow amateur and ineffective gestures towards the political life to diminish whatever chance they may have of developing a rich private integrity:

She was a queer, indeed . . . a flaccid, unhealthy, whimsical woman, who still had a capacity to cling. What she clung to was 'society' and a position in the world which a secret whisper told her she had never had and a voice more audible reminded her she was in danger of losing. . . . Verena was born not only to lead their common sex out of bondage, but to remodel a visiting-list which bulged and contracted in the wrong places, like a country-made garment. As the daughter of Abraham Greenstreet, Mrs. Tarrant has passed her youth in the first Abolitionist circles, and she was aware how much such a prospect was clouded by her union with a young man who had begun life as an itinerant vendor of lead-pencils (he had called at Mr. Greenstreet's door in the exercise of this function), had afterwards been for a while a member of the celebrated Cayuga community, where there were no wives, or no husbands, or something of that sort (Mrs. Tarrant could never remember), and had still later (though before the development of the healing faculty) achieved distinction in the spiritualistic world.

We can read this sort of sketch (and it is only one of many aspects of Mrs. Tarrant, cumulative in their effect) with an indulgent smile, confident that Henry James will never be so crude as to betray our mood and suddenly turn on us with sermons about 'motives' or 'compensations' or 'wish-fulfilments.' This confidence is implicit, and the humour and the sympathy co-exist without embarrassment. It is largely the inflation that brings the smile, and there is no cruelty about *that*. As an 'itinerant vendor of lead pencils,' Selah is both funnier and more dignified than as a 'pedlar,' for instance. If the Greenstreets objected to mesmeric healing as 'manual activity,' there is rich comedy in the inflation and yet the term suits both their own and Selah's view of his exercises. The tattered garments of pretence are held up to ridicule, but they are not still further rent; James restores them to their wearers for

whatever warmth they may still afford, and does not (like a Swift) leave his models entirely naked and comfortless.

Selah Tarrant himself is a medium for a double assault on the less rooted forms of 'public' life: he is not only, like his wife, a camp-follower of the irregular skirmishers among the intellectual forces, but also a fascinated devotee of the power of the American Press, that lusty organ of collective vulgarity which Henry James viewed with peculiar aversion:

The newspapers were his world, the richest expression, in his eyes, of human life; and for him, if a diviner day was to come upon earth, it would be brought about by copious advertisement in the daily prints. . . .

. . . the places that knew him best were the offices of the newspapers and the vestibules of the hotels—the big marble-paved chambers of informal reunion which offer to the streets, through high-glass plates, the sight of the American citizen suspended by his heels. Here, amid the piled-up luggage, the convenient spittoons, the elbowing loungers, the disconsolate 'guests,' the truculent Irish porters, the rows of shaggy-backed men in strange hats, writing letters at a table inlaid with advertisements, Selah Tarrant made innumerable contemplative stations.

In these and other portraits from *The Bostonians* there emerges an expression of Henry James's own strong desire—more familiarly documented in his letters, essays in autobiography, and in the long series of novels and tales devoted to what may be termed his international obsession—to escape from all this sort of thing to a more truly civilised sphere. A wincing appreciation of every last scrap of vulgarity in nineteenth-century American domestic conversation, whether exemplified in Matthias Pardon the slick reporter or Mrs. Tarrant the addle-pated explainer-away of social awkwardnesses, is delicately set down with tormenting accuracy. No wonder, the reader cannot help but feel, no wonder Henry James was so much in love with the European style of conversation recorded by the European novelists; no wonder he was determined to find it and in the end make his own characters speak always with point, always in the spirit of 'revised wisdom,' and not merely, like Mrs. Tarrant, making an ado about offering a piece of apple-fritter, or 'taking a gossip's view of great tendencies' like Matthias Pardon.

Olive Chancellor herself is one of the great tragic heroines of fiction, and it seems incredible that the neglect of Henry James's genius as a creator of characters should have kept that fact so generally hidden for so long. Her plight is so intrinsic, so affects

every page of the novel with a sense of tension and strain, that one does not miss, here, an elaborate late Preface which would have pointed out and underlined all one's own unaided responses to the powerful theme—except to note in its absence a further indication that the 'failure' of the book was due very largely to its unusual theme. (Mr. Edmund Wilson recalls that 'when Henry James was selecting the material for his collected edition, he was forced by the insistence of his publishers . . . and against his own inclination, to exclude *The Bostonians* from it.' Miss Theodora Bosanquet tells me that it would probably have been the next novel to be honoured with a Preface, if he had allowed himself time for the task. In a letter¹ of August, 1915, he still admits how much he would have enjoyed 'making it a much truer and more curious thing—it was meant to be curious from the first.')

Olive's tragedy is fairly simply that of self-delusion, but the self-delusion itself is anything but simple. It is soon clear that love and jealousy prompt all her actions with regard to Verena: the stresses and strains are pitiable to recognise. But it is altogether too easy a matter to point a finger at the raw spot and to say: 'She was in love with Verena and was ashamed of it, or perhaps did not really admit it to herself, but covered it up with all sorts of rationalisations which in turn were directed against man, the natural and favoured enemy of her unnatural passion.' Henry James himself certainly stoops to no such crude analysis. Her consequent morbidity of temperament is not, even for Basil Ransom, a matter for superior comment—'any sufficient account of her must lie very much to the rear of that.' Henry James returns here, with more profound and ambitious mastery, to the theme he had so brilliantly sketched in *Roderick Hudson*: the relationship between a conscientious thoughtful moralist and a creature of grace and personal fascination whose lack of those same qualities of moral high-seriousness alternately infatuate and disgust the pursuer. The essential lack of balance in the human situation was clear enough in *Roderick Hudson*, but it was not there developed on the plane of tragedy. Here, it indubitably is.

It adds to the complexity of the situation that Olive Chancellor does honestly believe in her 'cause.' We see her deeply devoted to it before ever Verena Tarrant steps on to the stage. We see her instinctive fear of Basil Ransom, that bright-eyed exponent of personal arrangements and the anti-progressive enemy of 'causes,' long before that fear becomes a dread that he will steal Verena away from her. Indeed, if his intrusion were the only fear, Olive

¹ *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 498.

would, even in the face of the successful conclusion of his outrage to her happiness, lose tragic stature. It is so much more than that. We are shown, by superb and tactful references, that Verena was bound in the end to disappoint her protectress, with or without assistance from that lady's cousin. If Olive had her own tragic flaw, so—from Olive's point of view—had Verena. It was the flaw most likely to strike against Olive's own, and wound her at her weakest point.

In her previous shy attempts to nourish her sad courage on something more tangible than 'causes,' Olive had found the young women whom she approached all 'odiously mixed up with Charlie,' and had retired conscious of defeat. With Verena there was no 'Charlie.' She was not just another 'pale shop-maiden' who 'couldn't make out what she wanted them to do.' Verena, who had 'sat on the knees of somnambulists, and had been passed from hand to hand by trance-speakers,' had been hitherto defended from that particular danger by the accident of her eccentric upbringing. It soon becomes evident that it *was* only an accident, and Olive's first major self-delusion was in setting any store by it. Olive's sister Mrs. Luna, that bedizened arch-priestess of *la vie intime*, was not wholly prejudiced when she announced that Verena was 'an artful little minx and cared as much for the rights of women as she did for the Panama Canal,' and added: 'She will give Olive the greatest cut she has ever had in her life. She will run off with some lion-tamer; she will marry a circus-man!' Coming quite early in the novel there is a significance—sinister for Olive—in one brief sentence about Verena, a sentence gaining point from its position at the end of a chapter: 'Her ideas of enjoyment were very simple; she enjoyed putting on her new hat, with its redundancy of feather, and twenty cents appeared to her a very large sum.' The redundancy of feather, that gay straw in the wind of Verena's freshness, implies a potential 'Charlie,' that figure appearing to Miss Chancellor's distressed imagination as 'a young man in a white overcoat and a paper collar.'

The recurring theme, in Henry James's novels, of the relationship between two contrasted and mutually attractive types (the integrated moralist and the wavering child of genius or intuition) had already been worked out between man and man in *Roderick Hudson*, between man and woman in *The Portrait of a Lady* and elsewhere, and is now worked out in *The Bostonians* between woman and woman. The early short story *Benvolio* had posed the problem in its simplicity, where the two 'types' are united in one person. There it was a legend, developed on the plane of a fairy-story. The symbolism

of the bright young man's two rooms—one large gay room for entertaining his friends and one small solitary room for study and composition, the former overlooking a fashionable street and the latter giving on a walled garden—is symbolism simple but quintessential. The 'ambiguity' of Henry James is progressively revealed as a tormented uncertainty of purpose, of wish, in himself; no novelist has ever described the state so often or so well, with all those vague gradations of mood somehow absorbed into the very texture of his prose and never forced—to their inevitable destruction—into a harsh code of pros and cons. Here, it is Verena who is the slight vessel of that mercurial fluid. *Her* aims are, at first, truly mixed, for her *capacities* are, at first, truly mixed. With Olive herself the intuitive free 'personal' life could never have succeeded, and it was her tragic delusion to make that attempt. The 'person' Olive fell in love with was the brilliant accidental personification of her own left-handed craving for a 'personal' life. That she could never honestly allow for the flowering of the free personal life in Verena herself was not only fatal to the false relationship of compromise between them (a relationship based, for a time steadily enough, on mutual admiration); it also proclaimed her own *inability* to love freely, free from her morals, free from her programme, free from her other self. Courage she had in plenty, but not that saving disgrace of moral slovenliness that would bid her follow the moment's whim. When she has achieved her aim and has quite literally bought Verena from her parents (a curious relapse into bondage for a grand-daughter of Abraham Greenstreet the Abolitionist), she still shows every sign of resisting her personal motives. Or, to be more accurate, the author and his readers seem to share her uncertainty, for it is not until the very end that Olive's passion breaks through her own defensive positions. Meanwhile, with that impressionable girl her prisoner, with this Bohemian wayward unorthodox object of her affection living as her friend and *protégée*, Olive manages to convince herself (and, for a long time, Verena too) of the high morality of her programme:

'We will work at it together—we still study everything.' Olive almost panted; and while she spoke the peaceful picture hung before her of still winter evenings under the lamp, with falling snow outside, and tea on a little table, and successful renderings, with a chosen companion, of Goethe; almost the only foreign writer she cared about; for she hated the writing of the French, in spite of the importance they had given to women.

Olive's loss of Verena to Basil Ransom reaches the plane of open stark tragedy in those harrowing closing chapters of the novel

where the strain breaks at last in shrill awful hysteria like the grinding of an engine beyond endurance or lubrication. Henry James, with that customary embarrassment which overwhelmed him always on such occasions, calls in the aid of rhetoric, even of melodrama. It is all competently done, but on what a disappointing level, after the sustained critical poise of the rest of the novel :

The expression on her face was a thing to remain with him for ever ; it was impossible to imagine a more vivid presentment of blighted hope and wounded pride. Dry, desperate, rigid, she yet wavered and seemed uncertain ; her pale, glittering eyes strained forward, as if they were looking for death. Ransom had a vision, even at that crowded moment, that if she could have met it there and then, bristling with steel or lurid with fire, she could have rushed on it without a tremor, like the heroine that she was.

With Verena, for a time, there had been a balance, a poise of warring elements. Like a needle between two magnets she could swing freely, now to Olive, now to Basil Ransom. It is not too much to say that in the end she swung home to that magnet whose forces were constant, undivided : she could with her ' personal ' life love Basil on his own terms and find in the end her ' Charlie ' : she could possibly with her ' public ' self have loved Olive on Olive's ' public ' terms. It was the essence of Olive's tragedy that when she in turn attempted to put out a personal attraction, the needle flickered awhile and then finally came to rest where that particular pull was strongest and simplest—not in Olive against whom no needle sensitive to manifold impulsions and repulsions could ever quietly nestle, but in Basil whose less ' worthy ' powers were concentrated in a single attraction.

IV

Miss Rebecca West was of the opinion ¹ that *The Bostonians*, in spite of descriptive passages of great beauty, failed to ' come off,' and renewed the kind of charge we have seen brought against *The Princess Casamassima* : ' this musical disclosure of fine material is interrupted past any reader's patience by a nagging hostility to political effort.' Mr. Edmund Wilson, however, although he contrives to find Olive Chancellor ' horrid ' and ' clammy,' delivers the judgment that in these two novels and in *The Tragic Muse* Henry James gave ' his clearest and most elaborate criticism of life '—a judgment recalling the author's own admission ² that in these three novels ' I " go behind " right and left.' And Mr. Van Wyck

¹ *Henry James* (1916), p. 71.

² *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 324.

Brooks, by no means an over-sympathetic critic, asks : ¹ ' Who that recalls *The Bostonians*, that picture of a world which seems to consist of nothing but hands, reproving, pushing, pulling, exploiting hands, can doubt that, in all this, James was inspired by the sacred terror of his own individuality ? '

Here, I think, we have the germ of the matter. But the germ is largely hidden by conditions which are, for the reader, all gain. I agree with Miss West that there are passages in *The Bostonians* ' that one would like to learn by heart '—to such an extent that in preparing notes for the present essay I found myself confronted, in the end, by no fewer than ninety pages of eminently quotable extracts ! Whatever conclusions one may draw concerning Henry James's ' criticism of life,' there is no doubt that by 1886, at the age of 43, he had found himself as a novelist and was writing with fluent mastery. There is observable in both *The Princess Casamassima* and *The Bostonians* an exuberance oddly at variance with the strained strenuous themes. This conscious pleasure in creative achievement not only endows minor characters with a quality of life far in excess of anything required by purely structural considerations (and of this vivid quality we have seen but a few examples only), but also peppers the two novels with wholly gratuitous felicities. Miss Birdseye can be claimed as essential to the pattern, but what are we to say of that superb caricature Mrs. Farrinder, who ' laboured . . . to give the ballot to every woman and to take the flowing bowl from every man '—except that although unnecessary she is wonderfully welcome, and would have served, along with other free marginal sketches, to make the reputation of a lesser novelist ? (I ask myself, indeed, once again—would not Henry James be a ' popular ' novelist today if his readers first discovered Mrs. Farrinder and Doctor Prance and Matthias Pardon, or Anastasius Vetch and Pinnie, *before* setting out with *The Ambassadors* or in quest of *The Golden Bowl* ?)

Is there not in all this wealth of personal observation any object-lesson by James himself in the precept, so largely smothered by his own enthusiastic practice, that until man is at home in his immediate social life he cannot hope to derive sufficient inner nourishment to be strong enough to face, let alone think of contributing towards the solution of the problems of his larger political setting ? If there is a ' message ' in these masterpieces of the novelist's art, it is surely : ' Put your own house in order.' We need not (*pace* Miss West) be unfriendly to political progress in order to understand Basil Ransom's view : ' He, too, had a private vision of reform, but

¹ *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1928), p. 46.

the first principle of it was to reform the reformers.' And just as Hyacinth Robinson's plight is in effect a far more damning indictment of the Victorian social system than any speech from the lips of Paul Muniment, so even Basil Ransom himself, constitutionally averse to schemes of amelioration, gives us a personal wince at the unfairness of things as he looks about him in the rich home of his reforming cousin :

He ground his teeth a little as he thought of the contrasts of the human lot ; this cushioned feminine nest made him feel unhoused and underfed. Such a mood, however, could only be momentary, for he was conscious at bottom of a bigger stomach than all the culture of Charles Street could fill.

The author's sympathy goes out, of course, to his chief figures, bewildered in their 'public' world—to Hyacinth and to Olive. But he cannot conceal his sidelong admiration for those happier mortals who have come to terms with their environment—for Pinnie in *The Princess Casamassima*, and in *The Bostonians* for such a person as Doctor Prance, that trim little female physician who wins the esteem even of Basil Ransom, a Southerner through and through and the bitter masculine enemy of Women's Rights :

She stood there an instant, turning over the whole assembly a glance like the flash of a watchman's bull's-eye, and then quickly passed out. Ransom could see that she was impatient of the general question and bored with being reminded, even for the sake of her rights, that she was a woman—a detail that she was in the habit of forgetting, having as many rights as she had time for. It was certain that whatever might become of the movement at large, Doctor Prance's own little revolution was a success.

This sneaking sympathy for people who are competent in small matters is matched in innumerable instances by a cynical irritation aroused by people who are incompetent in larger affairs. Mrs. Luna laughs at sister Olive's 'thoughtfulness' : 'That's what they call in Boston being very "thoughtful,"' Mrs. Luna said, 'giving you the Back Bay (don't you hate the name ?) to look at, and then taking the credit for it.' Olive herself winces at vulgarity and is virtuously ashamed of her every wince ('in a career in which she was constantly exposing herself to offence and laceration, her most poignant suffering came from the injury of her taste'), whereas her adored Miss Birdseye, for whom 'there was a genius in every bush,' 'was always trying to obtain employment, lessons in drawing, orders for portraits, for poor foreign artists, as to the greatness of whose talent she pledged herself without reserve ; but in point of fact she

had not the faintest sense of the scenic or plastic side of life.' Selah Tarrant, for all his pretensions, 'couldn't hold the attention of an audience; he was not acceptable as a lecturer,' and as for his wife, 'she knew that he was an awful humbug,' and she herself was not worthy of Verena's gifts: 'the commonness of her own surface was a non-conductor of the girl's quality.' Matthias Pardon, representative of the Great American Press, 'regarded the mission of mankind upon earth as a perpetual evolution of telegrams,' and it was only the 'newest thing' that 'came nearest exciting in his mind the sentiment of respect.' The whole caricature of Mrs. Farrinder is etched with enjoyable malice, and even Mrs. Burrage, the female Anti-Feminist rampant, represents the domestic hearth at its most complacent but does not escape the barb of James's satire, directed in *The Bostonians* against all those who adopt a rigid attitude to life based on insufficient personal grounds: 'she could fancy how Mrs. Burrage would be affected by the knowledge that her son had been refused by the daughter of a mesmeric healer. She would be almost as angry as if she had learnt that he had been accepted.' Finally, the gaunt tragic figure of Olive Chancellor is sometimes shown in a light not so much unsympathetic as 'critical' in the somewhat academic sense of the word. In the first introductory sketch we are told that 'it was the usual things of life that filled her with silent rage; which was natural enough, inasmuch as, to her vision, everything that was usual was iniquitous.' She and Verena, congratulating themselves on 'the wonderful insight they had obtained into the history of feminine anguish,' nevertheless plan their future activities with unbruised will, and there is some savagery in the comment: 'A person who might have overheard some of the talk of this possibly infatuated pair would have been touched by their extreme familiarity with the idea of earthly glory.' To hunt no further afield, there is even at times a direct charge against Olive's intellectual integrity: 'I have said that it was Miss Chancellor's plan of life not to lie, but such a plan was compatible with a kind of consideration for the truth which led her to shrink from producing it on poor occasions.'

These instances of narrative comment lend plausibility to the view that Henry James was speaking his own mind (or part of it) when he puts tart observations into the mouth of Basil Ransom. This thoughtful Southerner disliked 'mediums, communists, vegetarians,' was sensitive to the wrongs suffered by the defeated Confederate States, but refrained from 'prating in the market-place.' Yet we are explicitly informed that 'he had always had a desire for public life; to cause one's ideas to be embodied in national conduct

appeared to him the highest form of human enjoyment.' At the same time (and here the personal overtones of his creator are surely apparent?) 'he thought [his age] talkative, querulous, hysterical, maudlin, full of false ideas, of unhealthy germs, of extravagant, dissipated habits, for which a great reckoning was in store,' and we are made to feel that it was from this caricature of the public life, the 'windy, wordy reiteration of inanities,' as well as from the personal clutches of Olive Chancellor, that he wished to rescue Verena.

Such an account, necessarily brief, might lend colour to Miss West's view that *The Bostonians* has an infuriating 'nagging hostility to political effort,' were it not for the ample evidence of James's complementary sympathy for his band of suffragettes. Basil Ransom immediately sensed his cousin's intense gravity: 'the simplest division it is possible to make of the human race is into the people who take things hard and the people who take things easy. He perceived very quickly that Miss Chancellor belonged to the former class.' And a little later: 'she gave him an uneasy feeling—the sense that you could never be safe with a person who took things so hard.' We are left in no doubt as to her private psychology: she complains to Verena that 'you don't dislike men as a class' and yet it is carefully pointed out that 'it was a curious incident of her zeal for the regeneration of her sex that manly things were, perhaps on the whole, what she understood best.' But far more evocative of the reader's sympathy than any clumsy indication of her half-recognised 'motives' is the slow cumulative weight of Olive's conscious braveries and a certain undeniable 'quality.' She is credited with 'a gentle dignity, a serenity of wisdom,' and 'the detachment from error, of a woman whose self-scrutiny had been as sharp as her deflexion.' Verena speaks for the reader when she tells her friend 'you have a fearful power of suffering'—and suffering of such intensity would, we feel, be neither humanly possible nor artistically effective in a character of less than Olive's stature. She is, no less than the 'battered, unpensioned' Miss Birdseye herself, a representative of the 'heroic age of New England.'

The scattered quotations in these notes on *The Bostonians* and *The Princess Casamassima* will have given small notion of the fluent rich elegance of the early Jacobean style; there are whole chapters without a flaw, prose in which subtlety and dignity combine to form a medium of quite astonishing self-sufficiency. I would invite attention to a single aspect of this prose of James's early maturity, mainly for the explanatory light it may throw on his later more 'difficult' mode of communication. I have already suggested that the 'inflation' in the portraits of the Tarrant family has a function as

well as (for readers who enjoy stylistic jokes) a gratuitous delight. We may smile at Verena's 'perpendicular journeys' strap-hanging in a tramcar, and even more when, on boarding a similar vehicle, Miss Birdseye was 'insert[ed] . . . into the oblong receptacle'; Mrs. Tarrant doesn't merely enjoy the paper—'from this publication she derived inscrutable solace'; Ransom's Southern relations exist on a 'farinaceous diet' and Olive's conscience is indicated as 'that attentive organ'; in a poor quarter of a town little children become 'the infant population' and the grass 'thin herbage'; the erratic violence of Verena's education is deemed to show 'a want of continuity,' and Matthias Pardon's gossip columns are devoted 'to the great end of preventing the American citizen from attempting clandestine journeys.' Sarcasm is altogether too simple a label for these apparent verbal absurdities; there is a very real sense in which each one of them is *true*, more true than the simpler paraphrase, because in smiling at them we remember that from the inside of the mind of the character concerned there is nothing funny in the tone. Mrs. Tarrant may never have used the words, but she did somehow see herself, pompously, as 'deriving inscrutable solace' rather than just reading the paper—as anyone will agree who has ever been irritated by the complacent smirk of some clubman behind his copy of *The Times*.

In the second volume of *The Princess Casamassima* there is a subtler instance rather more indicative of the controlled conscious 'inflation' of the later style. The Prince and Madame Grandoni are sitting in Hyde Park, watching the riders jogging up and down. The state of mind of these self-conscious observers, meeting to debate in solemn ceremony some matter which in our less stately age would be disposed of in a few words of psycho-analytical slang, is indicated with beautiful *economy* (there is the signal point) in the half-amused half-serious tone of the narrator: they sat 'amid a wilderness of empty chairs and with nothing to distract their attention from an equestrian or two left over from the cavalcades of a fortnight before, and whose vain agitation in the saddle the desolate scene seemed to throw into high relief.' If there are *not* states of mind in which jogging riders appear accurately and vividly as agitated equestrians, then I am a poor reader and Henry James a pompous ass.

W. H. Hudson's London

BY MARGARET LANE

There are areas of London which, however hopefully planned, however respectably covered with brick and plaster, adorned with pediments and porticoes, grandiloquently named in streets and crescents and squares, seem destined, quickly and hopelessly, to go down. The prosperous families for whom they were intended do not occupy them long. The neighbourhood is no sooner built than it deteriorates : lean-looking cats abound, weaving their way in and out the area railings : and the passer-by is made silently aware that it is board-residence, not life, which mysteriously stirs behind those flaking façades.

This is the fate that long ago laid its hand on Pimlico, where the river fog rises early and lies late ; on long reaches of Brompton and South Kensington ; parts of Bloomsbury and Bayswater ; and the whole sad seedy world, ' that brick desert ' as W. H. Hudson bitterly described it, which lies all about Notting Hill Station, between Kensington and Kensal Green.

Hudson, destined to be a great naturalist and writer of prose, the poet of the world of birds, a creator of strange tropical and South American tales, came to London from the Argentine in 1869, and made his way to Bayswater, to a boarding-house at 11 Leinster Square. He was twenty-nine years old, immensely tall, already bearded and stooping, with piercing eyes, an appearance of great strength, and a diseased heart of which he was told he must soon die.

He had no parents, no prospects, no money, little hope. His father had been a New Englander who had emigrated to the Argentine and had lived by sheep-farming. He himself had been born at Quilmes, ten miles from Buenos Aires, and had grown up among gauchos, bad-men and hard-bitten farmers on the vast treeless plains of South America. At fifteen the hardy, sinewy boy, who rode like a centaur and had spent his whole life on the pampas, contracted rheumatic fever and suffered a long illness which all but destroyed his heart. There was nothing to be done, the doctors said ; he could never live to be a man. (He lived in spite of his heart, to eighty-one, but the doctors had given him a shock from which he never recovered and the fear of death clouded his whole life.)

For the next fifteen years he wandered idly, by the borders of the Gran Chaco, across the plains of Patagonia, believing himself doomed, expecting every day to die. And at twenty-nine, finding himself still alive, though an orphan and almost penniless, and remembering that his father's father had been a Devon man and that the dreams of his youth had always been of England, he packed his few possessions in a box and made the long voyage from Buenos Aires to Bayswater.

On the morning after his arrival in London he records, 'I went out to explore, and walked at random, never inquiring my way of any person, and not knowing whether I was going east or west. After rambling about for some three or four hours I came to a vast wooded place where few persons were about. It was a wet, cold morning in early May, after a night of incessant rain. . . . As I advanced further into this wooded space the dull sounds of traffic became fainter, while ahead the continuous noise of many cawing rooks grew louder and louder. I was soon under the rookery listening to and watching the birds as they wrangled with one another, and passed in and out among the trees. . . .'

Ten years later that wooded grove in Kensington Gardens, seven hundred splendid trees, was felled, and the rooks deserted. And Hudson, marooned by poverty, had married the fifty-year-old landlady of Leinster Square, Emily Wingrave, a faded soprano who had been kind to him, and for whom he now answered the doorbell and carved the mutton at the head of the lodgers' table.

They struggled together for eight years against increasing shabbiness and seediness, and the steady deterioration of their trade. In a comfortless top room, when he could be spared, Hudson was beginning to write, though almost no editor would pay for what he had written. In his aloof uncommunicative way, too, he was making friends—Gissing, shabbier and seedier even than himself; Morley Roberts, ebullient author and journalist; dashing Cunningham Graham, courtly as Don Quixote. They saw him sometimes despondent, sometimes irritable, jumping up from the supper table to squeeze and drink undiluted lemon juice at the sideboard; setting off, when some occasional windfall seemed to justify a break, on long economical walks 'out of the immense unfriendly wilderness of London,' through the villages of Hampshire and over Salisbury Plain, walks on which Emily Hudson, patient and uncomprehending, sometimes accompanied him.

In 1884 the boarding-house failed, and they moved to a humbler one in Southwick Crescent, Paddington. Here, in the two years before this, too, had to be given up as a loss, Hudson wrote his first

South American romance, *The Purple Land*, and from the observations and memories of his youth began to construct his *Argentine Ornithology*. The naturalist of genius, awakened in those early years of wandering on the pampas and now conscious and mature, had begun his life's work ; and it is a strange reflection that his inspired expression of the beauty of nature, the poetry of birds, the mysteriousness of untrodden and tropical places, was achieved through years of imprisonment in the less lovely areas of London—in Bayswater, in Paddington, in Notting Hill.

Yet it was those very instincts of the naturalist, the detached observer in him, the man passionate for beauty, which enriched his London life and made it rewarding. When he and his wife, after the second boarding-house failure, lived on the edge of starvation for a time at Ravenscourt Park (they subsisted for one empty week on a tin of cocoa) he fed his soul on the park itself in gratitude. 'I lived for a long time beside it in sad days, when the constant sight of such a green and shady wilderness from my windows was a great consolation.' And when he was too hungry for long walks into the country, in that 'wasted and dreary period, when I was often in the parks and open spaces in all parts of London,' he studied the London birds, even the sparrows, 'ever busy at their scavenging in the dusty and noisy ways, everywhere finding some organic matter to comfort their little stomachs.'

Fortune smiled, or rather relaxed her frown, on the Hudsons at last. His work, both as naturalist and novelist, began to be known ; an influential admirer who recognised his quality and was shocked by the crushing poverty of his condition, persuaded the Prime Minister to award him a civil list pension of £150 a year ; and a sister of Mrs. Hudson's died, leaving her a tall dark narrow house, number 40 St. Luke's Road, Notting Hill. True, the house was mortgaged for £1,100, almost its whole value ; but by letting off the basement and lower floors, and themselves living only at the top, they made ends meet, and Hudson was able to take his frugal leisurely summer excursions across the south of England, to Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk in November to watch the wild geese, and in the little comfortless top room in St. Luke's Road, where he slept behind a cotton curtain and kept his papers in a trunk under the table, to ripen the splendid fruits of his imaginative life.

Here Hudson lived until he died, spending the last ten years alone. Here he concealed himself, living according to his secretive nature, mixing with his friends when he felt like it but uncovering himself to none. Here he wrote *Green Mansions*, the moving half-

mystical, half-poetic tale of Rima the bird-woman in the forests of the Orinoco ; *A Shepherd's Life*, his great calm book of Salisbury Plain ; and *Far Away and Long Ago*, the beautiful nostalgic record of his own boyhood.

What he never wrote about, what indeed he concealed, anxiously obliterating all trace as an animal might draw sticks and leaves across the mouth of its hole, was his grey life in London, his fifty years in that 'province covered with houses,' his long living and slow dying in the byways of Notting Hill. Even his nearest friends, even Morley Roberts who knew him for forty years, knew little enough, were allowed to know little of this hidden life. Hudson had a horror of biography, and by destroying all letters and records, and falsifying or suppressing what could not be destroyed, he made certain that nothing approaching a true history of his own life could ever be written.

Why should Hudson have gone to such trouble to blot out his life ? The answer, I fancy, to his fierce concealment lies in the unbearable contrast between his imaginative genius and his life. The mind that fed on beauty in her wildest forms, that had nourished a young spirit in the lonely places of the world, and had beguiled him with a passion for a half-human, half-magical 'daughter of the Didi' in those steaming forests of the Orinoco where he had never been, sickened in dismay at the Bayswater boarding-house, the Paddington lodgings, the 'treeless district, most desolate,' where his maturity was spent. The lover of Rima, the gaucho adventurer, the shepherd of Salisbury Plain, even the rapt bird-watcher of the Norfolk coast had nothing to do with the old gentleman who came down so carefully from the top room in St. Luke's Road, and on days of special prosperity went to Whiteleys' for lunch, 'flapping along like a great eagle in the old-fashioned tail-coat he always wore,' to meet his friends and hear a little gossip, and complain if there were no suet pudding on the menu.

The disparity was too painful, and Hudson knew it. Only one profile of his life would he turn to the light ; the face of beauty and achievement, the poet's, the naturalist's face. Except for their shadowy outline, which he could not quite destroy, the features of his life in London were erased by his own hand, so that what he wished to ignore should remain forgotten.

Raymond Radiguet Ou 'Les Bizarries Du Cœur'

BY MARTIN TURNELL

I

In a characteristic glimpse of the French youth who crowded the smart cocktail bars at the end of the first World War, M. François Mauriac speaks sorrowfully of 'these lamentable children who have returned from the war and from the jaws of death with their frustrated, unsatisfied expression' and 'for whom everything seems to be an opportunity for waste and self-destruction.' We may concede that for the moralist the spectacle of their brittle, hysterical gaiety and their wholesale surrender to a 'music whose rhythms undermine and dissolve personality, to those forms of alcohol which stifle conscience' was a discouraging one. Yet we cannot help feeling, a little guiltily, that in 1920 the siren must have sung more sweetly than she does today and that her victims' gentle doom was vastly preferable to our own sordid plight.

The moralist of twenty years ago, however, was not without his consolations. He could congratulate himself on the presence of at least one righteous man. Among the *enfants lamentables*, observers noticed a tall, pale young man whose gravity contrasted oddly with the feverish good-timing of his friends and was, perhaps, accentuated by the monocle *qu'il n'arrivait pas à fixer*. For though the young man went the rounds and seemed to indulge in the same pleasures as the other young men of his age, one felt that he did not belong to their 'set.' There was something faintly disapproving in his expression. 'What a strange hard look he gave his companions,' exclaims one writer. 'It was a little short-sighted and seemed to be turned inwards, as though he were secretly irritated not so much by frivolity as by the imposture that it concealed.'¹

A few months later Raymond Radiguet—for he was the young man—was dead, carried off by typhoid at the age of twenty. He had published a volume of poems called *les Jours en feu* when he was seventeen. His first novel appeared shortly before his death in 1923 under the title of *le Diable au corps* and the second, *le Bal*

¹ Henri Massis, *Reflexions sur l'art du roman*, Paris, 1927, p. 53.

du comte d'Orgel, was published posthumously in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in June and July 1924.

The end of the man was the beginning of the legend. The air of disapproval, the impression of being out of step with his time, which had attracted the attention of observers, was confirmed by scattered comments which have been preserved by friends or occur in his published works :

Racine seems at first to be less daring than Rimbaud. Racine's daring is simply more refined than Rimbaud's because it pushes modesty to the point at which it escapes notice.

In an extremely complicated period like our own when everyone goes out of his way to write like nobody else, it seems impertinent to write like anyone else.

[Duty is] a reality which only appears insipid to people who have no taste.

When we recall that this was the heyday of Dada and the Surrealists, of Proust and Gide and the theory of *l'immoralisme*, we can see how ill Radiguet's tastes and aims fitted in with those of his contemporaries. It is not surprising that his novels provoked a lively debate, that some critics considered them works of genius—one critic compared *le Diable au corps* to the *Princesse de Clèves* and the *Liaisons dangereuses*!—while others dismissed them as 'prentice work or as imitations of the great French classic novelists.

Le Diable au corps is far from being a great novel, but it seems to me to be a remarkable book. It was no doubt the work of an apprentice, but I shall try to show that Radiguet was no ordinary apprentice. The story possesses the simplicity of the French classic novelists. A schoolboy of fourteen is introduced by his father (who turns out to be a *père complaisant*) to a girl of nineteen who is engaged to a soldier. Marthe marries Jacques who returns to the front. The schoolboy seduces the wife or rather they seduce one another. A child is born and Marthe dies in childbirth. The husband suspects nothing. Only the boy and his father know.

This bald summary gives little idea of the power of the book or of its horror. It is difficult for an English reader to conceive such a situation even when allowance is made for the precocity of French and the backwardness of English schoolboys, and it is hardly likely to be popular in a country which has never appreciated the *Liaisons dangereuses*. It is not a book that one feels lukewarm about, any more than one feels lukewarm about *Adolphe*. You either like it very much or not at all. If you do like it, you will probably agree that its quality is best described by the French word *troublant*.

The novel is not sensational or salacious as it would certainly have been in less skilful hands. The style, with its short neat sentences, has the grey neutral tones of the prose of the *Liaisons dangereuses* and the psychological insight is clearly inherited from a great tradition. The nineteen-year-old novelist was very conscious of his responsibilities :

I shall be severely reproached for what I have done, [runs the opening sentence], but how can I help it? Was it my fault that I was twelve years old a few months before war broke out? The difficulties that I encountered during this extraordinary period were no doubt of a kind which one never experiences at that age ; but since there is nothing on earth which in spite of appearances is strong enough to age us, it was as a child that I behaved in an adventure which would have embarrassed a grown man.

Radiguet puts his finger on one of his own secrets here. One writer has called the book 'le seul livre *vrai* que nous ayons sur l'adolescence.' It is not merely that he tells the story of an adolescent love-affair that ends in tragedy with a power and restraint which would have done credit to a mature writer. His peculiar achievement lies in the veracity with which he presents a child's vision of the world and his refusal to allow the naked vision to be toned down or blurred by empty moralising or by literary tricks borrowed from the repertoire of mature writers. He writes with the child's vividness and directness and he reveals the child's ruthless disregard for other people's feelings. It is because this novel appeals to our own childish memories and to primitive feelings, which are gradually covered over with a veneer of civilisation as we grow up, that its impact is so disturbing. The adult reader is disconcerted by the spectacle of Marthe tossing her soldier husband's letters unread into the fire or the 'hero's' attempted seduction of another child in Marthe's own flat which one writer calls the most shocking incident in any novel since the *Liaisons dangereuses* :

Je n'avais jamais déshabillé de femmes ; j'avais plutôt été déshabillé par elles . . . Ailleurs que dans la chambre de Marthe, l'eussé-je désirée ?

These are by no means isolated incidents : they reflect an attitude of mind which informs the whole book. I have used the word 'ruthless' and I want to insist on it in order to dispose of the suggestion that the novel is in some way 'cynical' or a gratuitous attempt to shock. 'Cynical' implies that one is disillusioned and

inclined to be sentimental over the lost illusions. Now the child's outlook is quite different from this. He is not disillusioned but free from illusions, and there is a complete absence of sentimentality. He is untroubled by the inhibitions which develop as we grow older and there is nothing to prevent him from putting down what he sees frankly and nakedly. There is an odd impartiality about his vision. Radiguet's child sees some of Marthe's water-colours before he meets the girl herself and remarks candidly, in recalling them :

Ces aquarelles étaient sans nulle recherche ; on y sentait la bonne élève du cours de dessin, tirant la langue, léchant les pinceaux.

When he helps Marthe buy furniture for her flat before her marriage he observes :

Son fiancé goûtait le style Louis XV.

Le mauvais goût de Marthe était autre ; elle aurait plutôt versé dans le japonais . . .

J'étais parvenu à transformer, meuble à meuble, ce mariage d'amour, ou plutôt d'amourette, en un mariage de raison, et lequel !

The child can only think of the present. When he learns that Marthe is *enceinte*, he remarks :

Je voulais profiter de Marthe avant que l'abimât sa maternité. The choice of words here certainly recalls Laclos.

He is well aware of the reasons for his ruthlessness and when he says :

L'amour anesthésiait en moi tout ce qui n'était pas Marthe. Je ne pensais pas que mon père pût souffrir—

he is offering an explanation, not an excuse. He displays the same impartiality when he examines his own feelings, and we have to recognise that it is not very different from the insight of the mature writer :

Lying beside Marthe the desire, which came over me from one minute to another, to be in bed by myself at home made me realise how intolerable life together would be. On the other hand, I could not imagine life without Marthe. I was beginning to pay the penalty of adultery.

These passages are interesting for another reason. In this book, which the author himself described as ' ce drame de l'avant-saison du cœur,'¹ the different stages of the adolescent love-affair—

¹ In his Foreword to *les Jours en feu*, 13th ed., Paris, 1925.

shyness, domination, possessiveness, doubts, jealousy, boredom, libertinage and the final disaster—follow one another with the same logic and are analysed with the same clarity as the corresponding stages of a mature love-affair. It is this that makes the novel unique in the literature of adolescence.

The style fits the subject. The writer's mind moves easily in the schoolboy's world of magnets and alarm-clocks and he draws on these things for some of his most effective images :

One day when I moved too close but without my face touching hers, I was like the needle which goes a fraction of an inch beyond the forbidden zone and is caught by the magnet.

I kissed Marthe on the shoulder, but she did not wake. A second and less chaste kiss acted with the violence of an alarm-clock. She shot up in bed . . .

It is characteristic of some of the great French novelists that their work often contains phrases which might have come from one of the seventeenth-century maxim-writers. They are not abstract pronouncements ; they spring directly from the contemplation of experience and are nearly always dramatically appropriate. The wisdom, which they distil, contributes largely to the sense of maturity which belongs peculiarly to the French novel. It is a characteristic which is already apparent in Radiguet's first novel :

The flavour of the first kiss disappointed me like a fruit that one tastes for the first time. It is not novelty but habit which provides the greatest pleasures.

Several times strangers took us for brother and sister. For there exist in us germs of resemblance which are developed by love.

He [Jacques] was clumsy. The one who is in love always exasperates the one who isn't.

In each case he gives first the observed fact, then the comment which places it in perspective and seems to illuminate it from within.

The merits of the book are not confined to psychological aperçus. The description of mistaken identity shows the novelist's sense of the dramatic. The narrator arrives unexpectedly at Marthe's flat during the night :

I opened the door and whispered ' Marthe ? '

' Rather than give me a fright like that,' she answered, ' you could very well have put off coming till the morning. You've got your leave a week early then ? '

She thought I was Jacques.

In spite of his youth, Radiguet was not content with the study of purely personal relations. There is an attempt all through the

book to give the reader a portrait of the age or rather of a particular moment—the 'extraordinary period' of which he speaks in his opening chapter—and to relate the individual to it. We have the impression that he was trying to force his experience and he seems to have been conscious that the experiment was not an unqualified success. It was no doubt very far-fetched to try to give a symbolical importance to the scene where the mad servant wanders with flying hair over the roofs of buildings amid the firework display, but the novelist's gift redeems him. The incident is admirably observed. We catch the very accent of the madwoman's voice when he describes it as: 'Inhumaine, gutturale, d'une douceur qui donnait la chair de poule,' and we shudder as we hear the thud of her body 'landing flat on the stone steps' when she throws herself from the roof:

Up to this point I had tried to stand up to everything though my ears were drumming and I felt faint. But when I heard people shout: 'She's still alive,' I fell senseless from my father's shoulders.

Radiguet is more successful in his glimpses of French provincial life, particularly in the account of the municipal councillor and his wife who prepared a 'surprise party' for their friends in the flat below Marthe's:

Now the surprise was Marthe and I . . . Imagine my amazement when I learnt that the amusement the Marins had in store for their guests was to stand under our room at the end of the afternoon in the hope of overhearing the sounds of our love-making.

It is, however, the personal story which holds our attention. The account of the horrifying expedition to Paris when Marthe was far gone with child, where the lovers are described as a 'Couple lamentable, oubliant sa beauté, sa jeunesse, honteux de soi comme un couple de mendiants,' draws this comment:

The night of the hotels was decisive, though after so many other extravagances I did not realise it at the time. But if I thought that one can limp along the whole of one's life like that, Marthe, who during the return journey was huddled in a corner of the carriage, exhausted, terrified, her teeth chattering, *understood everything*. Perhaps she even saw that this year, which had been like a race in a runaway car, could only have one end—death.

Radiguet's distinction is most evident in the closing chapters of the book and particularly in the description of the period between the birth of the child and Marthe's death which begins 'Notre maison respirait le calme' and which is unfortunately too long to quote. But I cannot omit the description of his reaction to Marthe's death:

Marthe! My jealousy pursued her into the very grave. I hoped that there was nothing after death. For the thought that the person we love may find herself in the middle of a large gathering at a celebration to which we are not invited is intolerable to us. I was at an age when one still does not think of the future. Yes, it was annihilation that I desired for Marthe rather than a new world where I might meet her again one day.

It is because a child finds himself engaged in an adventure 'which would have embarrassed a grown man' that childish failings, which are normally harmless enough, lead to tragedy. In this passage the wheel has come full circle. The bravado, which sustained him during the adventure, has disappeared; he is simply an angry, grief-stricken child. The words convey very well the part played by frustration in his grief, the sense that life has cheated him and the desire for a posthumous revenge on Marthe. Yet it is characteristic of Radiguet that even at this point his schoolboy retains his lucidity and can explain what has happened and why he feels as he does.

II

The undeniable promise of Radiguet's first novel seems to me to have been largely fulfilled in his second. We may feel that critics who professed to see resemblances between the *Princesse de Clèves* and *le Diable au corps* were paying the novelist a handsome compliment, but in *le Bal du comte d'Orgel* the resemblances are unmistakable. A young man named François de Sérèuse is introduced to the Comte Anne d'Orgel and his wife, Mahaut, and soon becomes one of their best friends. François and Mahaut fall in love. Although everyone believes that François has been accorded *les dernières faveurs*, the novel is a study not simply of an *amour chaste*, but of love which remains chaste in spite of the disappearance of traditional sanctions. One is almost tempted to say of Mme d'Orgel and M. de Sérèuse: 'Mme de Clèves et M. de Nemours sous d'autres noms'; but though the resemblances are far from being confined to the subject-matter, Radiguet was no imitator. The differences between the two novels are at least as striking as their resemblances.

The differences are most evident in the writers' conception of society. Radiguet deals like his distinguished predecessor with 'high society'; but compared with seventeenth-century society, it is coarser and its members less perceptive. When we set Mme de La Fayette's portrait of M. de Nemours beside Radiguet's of the Comte d'Orgel, we begin to see what has happened:

Mais ce prince était un chef-d'œuvre de la nature; ce qu'il

avait de moins admirable, c'était d'être l'homme du monde le mieux fait et le plus beau. Ce qui le mettait au-dessus des autres était une valeur incomparable et un agrément dans son esprit, dans son visage et dans ses actions que l'on n'a jamais vu qu'à lui seul.

Le comte Anne d'Orgel était jeune ; il venait d'avoir trente ans. On ne savait de quoi sa gloire, ou du moins son extraordinaire position était faite. Son nom n'y entraînait pas pour grand'chose, tant, même chez ceux qu'hypnotise un nom, le talent prime tout. Mais, il faut le reconnaître, ses qualités n'étaient que celles de sa race, et un talent mondain.

Radiguet does not believe in his age as Mme de La Fayette believed in hers and his hesitant—his deliberately hesitant—voice sounds like a mocking echo of her clear, measured tones. For there is an immense conviction behind her *chef-d'œuvre de la nature*, her *valeur incomparable*, her *agrément* which we do not find in the portrait of the Count. Radiguet speaks of the Count's *gloire*—it is another of Mme de La Fayette's favourite words—feels at once that it will not do and changes it to *extraordinaire position* ; but though the seventeenth-century novelist can tell us exactly why M. de Nemours was a great man, the modern novelist finds it very difficult to explain M. d'Orgel's 'extraordinary position' and concludes that it must be due to the *qualités . . . de sa race* and *un talent mondain*. His book is an account of a 'ruling class' which has retained its privileges but lost its function. The King and his Court, which were the pivot of the complicated hierarchy, have vanished ; the royal tournaments and the great balls, where Mme de La Fayette's characters distinguished themselves, have been replaced by Médrano's circus, Robinson's *dancing* or a *bal costumé* at the Hôtel d'Orgel.

Yet we must not overlook the significance of the word *race*. Radiguet knows that he is describing a doomed society, but he is not blind to its virtues or its grace. He looks upon it with an amused tenderness, lingering over the history of his noble families, delighting in the marriage of a Grimoard de la Verberie or a Tascher de la Pagerie, in the long summer holidays at Venice or a visit to the Austrian branch of the Orgels where the Count causes consternation by arriving during the inflation with a whole sack of paper money to provide for his *menus achats*. The personal drama is heightened by the sombre background of collapsing thrones and rising revolution ; but there is still time to sit back and take one's feelings to pieces, and the question whether or not to jump into bed with another man's wife still seems more important than anything else on earth.

It has been said that like those of the seventeenth-century novelists, Radiguet's characters are not much individualised, but they seem to me to have exactly the right amount of life for their purpose. The minor characters, in particular, which show a considerable advance on the minor characters in *le Diable au corps*, all fit neatly into Radiguet's careful scheme and are used to show the changes which are taking place in the tone of society. We are told of the amazing Princesse Hortense d'Austerlitz, for example, that 'In order not to have to use such a high-sounding name as hers, everyone called her Hortense. This suggested that she was everybody's "friend," as indeed she was except of the people who didn't want her.' She was descended from a Marshal of France who had begun life as a butcher's boy, 'but far from being ashamed of her origins, she paid tribute to the Marshal even in the choice of her lovers.' It is no accident that the minor characters constantly remind us of the seventeenth-century *caractères*. For Radiguet possessed the moralists' gift of seizing essentials, of fixing a gesture in a brief witty phrase. The Comte d'Orgel's father is a perfect vignette of the crusty old-world French aristocrat. When his ancestral seat was occupied during the war by the French military authorities, he replied to anyone who asked him for the pass-word: 'I am M. d'Orgel.' He was incapable of distinguishing the different ranks and addressed 'every soldier who had a stripe as "Monsieur l'Officier," whether he happened to be a sergeant or a colonel.' Paul Robin, the young diplomat, is also typical of the age. 'As a result of distrusting his heart,' we are told, 'he had very little heart left. He thought he was hardening, training himself, but it was simply a form of self-destruction . . . This slow suicide was what he most enjoyed when he thought of himself.'

It is, however, in the opening paragraphs that Radiguet's progress is most apparent:

Les mouvements d'un cœur comme celui de la comtesse d'Orgel sont-ils surannés? Un tel mélange du devoir et de la mollesse semblera peut-être, de nos jours, incroyable, même chez une personne de race et une créole. Ne serait-ce pas plutôt que l'attention se détourne de la pureté, sous prétexte qu'elle offre moins de saveur que le désordre?

Mais les manœuvres inconscientes d'une âme pure sont encore plus singulières que les combinaisons du vice. C'est ce que nous répondrons aux femmes, qui, les unes trouveront Mme d'Orgel trop honnête, et les autres trop facile.

It might be argued that Radiguet is just a little too explicit in

the statement of his aims in the third sentence, but this does not greatly detract from the obvious accomplishment of the prose. The feelings analysed in *le Diable au corps* were not in the nature of things particularly subtle and the direct, rather abrupt style was in keeping with the subject. The novelist's growing maturity and the complexity of his subject are evident in the balanced sentences of this opening chapter with their deliberate use of interrogatives. *Surannés* is one of the focal words of the book and we need to keep it constantly in mind. The ambiguity is intentional. What the novel sets out to do is to explore certain feelings which to the present age may appear 'old-fashioned,' to see what they are composed of and whether they are authentic. It is characteristic of Radiguet's style that while the *tone* is ambiguous, the *vocabulary* is extremely precise and words mean what they say. This can be seen when we come to the words describing moral qualities: *devoir—mollesse*; *pureté—vice*; *honnête—facile*. They are in no sense idle antitheses put in to give the passage pattern and balance. Radiguet's aim is to create a state of suspense, a *moral suspense* which keeps the mind nicely poised all the time between two sets of experiences which are, or rather appear to be, opposites. As the book unfolds, we find that we are being asked not to make moral judgments, but to discriminate between the qualities of different attitudes.¹

There is a further set of words which attracts our attention, the words suggesting motion: *mouvements d'un cœur*; *manœuvres inconscientes*; *combinaisons du vice*. Once again the words mean what they say. We are concerned not merely with feeling, but with the *movement* of feeling, with the unconscious manoeuvring on the part of the characters to conceal their true feelings from themselves and, finally, with 'combinations of feeling' or—the interrogative note is particularly significant here—'combinations of vice.'

Le Bal du comte d'Orgel like the *Princesse de Clèves* depends on constant variations of tempo and on the contrast between the movement of *feeling* and the movement of *events*. The leisurely development of the story is an essential part of Radiguet's technique, but there is no need to follow the ramifications of the 'plot.' We can turn at once to the remarkable analysis of François de Séryeuse's attachment for Mme d'Orgel which begins: 'L'amour venait de s'installer en lui'—

¹ As an example of 'suspense' and 'discrimination':

'Un couple qui danse révèle son degré d'entente. L'harmonie des gestes du comte et de la comtesse d'Orgel prouvait un accord que donne seul l'amour ou l'habitude.'

Love had taken root in him at a depth to which he himself could not penetrate. François de Sérèuse like many very young men was so constituted that he was only aware of his most vivid, that is to say his coarsest sensations. An evil desire would have affected him very differently from the beginnings of his love.

It is when an evil enters into us that we imagine ourselves in danger; but as soon as it has taken root, we can settle down comfortably with it and without even suspecting its presence . . .

The interest of this passage lies in the skill with which the novelist shows us feelings functioning simultaneously at two different levels—the levels represented by 'a depth to which he himself could not penetrate' and that of his 'coarsest sensations.' It only gains its full effect, however, when we compare it with a description of the Count's feelings for his wife and his friend. It does not occur to the Count that there is anything unusual in the way that François has so quickly become one of his best friends:

He did not analyse the motives for his preference. As it happened, the reason was incredible and the Count would simply have shrugged his shoulders if anyone had revealed it to him. Orgel preferred François to all his friends because François was in love with his wife.

François' love was not merely the mysterious explanation of the Comte d'Orgel's preference for him; it was this love that made the Count fall in love with his own wife. He began to love her as though the desire of another has been necessary to make him appreciate her value . . .

He had always avoided love as being something too exclusive. You need plenty of time for love and he had always been absorbed by frivolous things (*frivolités*).

Frivolités is another key-word. There are two contrasted movements in this book—an inward and an outward movement. There is the tendency for feelings to deepen, to undergo the transformation which is described by the word *installer*; and there is the contrary tendency for them to lose their vitality, to cheapen and change into *frivolités*. The Count is less finely endowed than his wife or his 'rival.' The whole of his career has been a flight from reality, a gravitation towards *frivolités*, and the words: 'He had always avoided love as being something too exclusive' are a condemnation. For 'exclusive' implies order and integration as opposed to the dissipation of *frivolités*.

It is, however, true of all the characters that they are dominated by a fear of genuine, deep-rooted feelings. The Countess and François go to extraordinary lengths to conceal their true feelings from themselves and, inevitably, they yield to another form of

tem
call
V
free
her.
the
U
ima
swee
Fran
whic
dem
M
T
is in
wha
d'un
The
the
'lov
stan
her
com
are n
In
wha
Late
No
faire
pale
de l'
H
It is
fear
that
Fran
help
hope
with
at all
'I
1 C
The l

temptation. It is the temptation to seek refuge in what Radiguet calls a *stratagème du cœur* which is clearly a form of *frivolité* :

Words have a great power. Mme d'Orgel had believed herself free to interpret her predilection for François in the way that suited her. This meant that she had struggled less against a feeling than the fear of giving it its true name.

Up to this point she had kept duty and love abreast, and she had imagined in her purity of mind that forbidden feelings are without sweetness. She had therefore misinterpreted her own feeling for François because she found this feeling agreeable. Today a feeling which had been hatched, nourished and had grown up in the dark demanded recognition.

Mahaut had to admit that she was in love with François.

This is the point at which the *stratagème du cœur* breaks down. It is impossible not to admire the skill with which Radiguet unravels what he calls, in his opening chapter, 'les manœuvres inconscientes d'une âme pure.' The *stratagème* is not simple, but complex. The confusion between the word and the thing it signifies, between the 'feeling' and the 'fear,' leads to the precarious balance of 'love' and 'duty' which is supported by a further misunderstanding. For it is Mme d'Orgel's own 'purity' which prevents her from interpreting her feelings correctly, and it is only at a comparatively late stage that she realises that 'forbidden feelings' are not necessarily disagreeable and gives them their 'true name.'

In discussing the opening chapter, I said that every word meant what it said and gave as an example the antithesis *devoir—mollesse*. Later in the book we are told of the Countess :

Nous l'avons dit, Mahaut était de ces femmes qui ne sauraient faire de l'agitation leur pain quotidien. Peut-être même la principale raison de la vertu de ses aïeules résidait-elle dans leur crainte de l'amour qui ôte le calme.

Her virtue is by no means as disinterested as it seems at first. It is rather a sign of *mollesse*, and *devoir* itself is little more than a fear of violent feeling *qui ôte le calme*. It is apparent, for example, that when the Countess, realising that she can no longer resist François, confesses her love to his mother and appeals to her for help, she is driven on both by her concern for her *calme* and by the hope that François will discover by this means that she is in love with him. In other words, *mollesse* and *devoir* are not opposites at all ; they are in the last analysis almost identical.¹

'Le drame,' wrote Radiguet, in a sentence whose full significance

¹ Compare this passage with one from the last chapter of the *Princesse de Clèves*. The Princess is speaking to M. de Nemours :

will shortly become apparent, 'Le drame se complait souvent autour des objets les moins significatifs. De quelle signification puissante il aime alors à revêtir un chapeau !' There are practically no 'great moments,' no 'big scenes' in this book, only little moments and little scenes. The most dramatic events are sudden changes of feeling, a sudden alteration in the tone of a conversation or the atmosphere of a dinner-party. The characters suddenly see themselves and one another as they really are and realise that though in a sense 'nothing has happened,' a vital change has taken place in their emotional lives. They know that what has happened cannot be undone, but this does not prevent them from trying desperately to undo it or, in the Count's words, to find *un moyen de tout réparer*. It is this that accounts for the muffled *angoisse* which is always throbbing just beneath the surface and makes the game of moral hide-and-seek that the characters play with themselves so exciting.

The dinner-party at which the Comte d'Orgel and his friends plan the fancy-dress ball is the climax of the novel and illustrates all Radiguet's virtues as a novelist :

Hester Wayne, un carnet sur ses genoux, dessinait des costumes informes. Hortense d'Austerlitz en improvisait sur elle-même. Elle mettait le salon à sac, se coiffait d'un abat-jour, essayait mille mascarades qui réveillèrent en Anne la passion la plus profonde des hommes de sa classe, à travers les siècles : celle du déguisement.

The word *déguisement* is the focal word of the passage and underlines the main theme of the novel. Its meaning is twofold. It stands for the characters' passion for disguising themselves, for the attempt to make all feelings and all actions conform outwardly to the pattern imposed by the aristocratic society to which they belong ; but it is also an ironical reference to the opposite tendency which exists simultaneously—the desire to escape from the pattern by putting on fancy-dress and escaping from their real selves. The *costumes informes* and the antics of the Princess, who ransacks the drawing-room and wears a lampshade as a headdress, thus stand for the anarchic impulses which lie beneath the surface of society and which are always threatening to break through and destroy its precarious balance. The characters' peculiar disguises lead to a sort of moral holiday, create an atmosphere in which 'Tout est permis.'

'Ce que je crois devoir à la mémoire de Monsieur de Clèves serait faible, s'il n'était soutenu par l'intérêt de mon repos . . .'

See, too, the description of the interview between Mme d'Orgel and Mme de Sérèuse :

'C'est une sainte, se disait-elle [Mme de Sérèuse], en face du calme que donnait à Mahaut la certitude d'être aimée.'

The decisive event at the dinner-party is the arrival of Prince Naroumof, the White Russian exile who has lost everything in the Revolution. His presence alters the whole tone of the gathering. He has really lived and suffered and is therefore out of place in this excessively refined society :

As soon as dinner began, Naroumof set out to be cheerful. Yet his presence froze the other guests. No smile can hide the imprint of suffering on a person's face. It is not the wrinkles or a change in the look in his eyes. A man who has suffered has not necessarily aged. The transformation goes deeper than that.

The Count is acutely aware of the embarrassment caused by Naroumof's presence and carefully steers the conversation away from Russia, away from the *profondeurs* towards *frivolités*. Naturally, the American crashes through all the reticences :

'How you must loathe these Bolsheviks,' said Hester Wayne to Prince Naroumof.

Anne d'Orgel was exasperated by this absurd remark. He had displayed the suppleness of an acrobat in avoiding the subject of Russia, and felt grateful to his wife for her support. He attributed his own puerile calculations to her and admired her for overcoming the difficulties so well by keeping Naroumof to herself. She treated him with respect and at the same time prevented the unfortunate conversation from becoming general.

This passage is a good example of the alterations in the atmosphere of a dinner-party of which I have already spoken. It shows, too, the closeness with which Radiguet sticks to his theme. The shallowness of the Count's reactions and his inability to grasp what Naroumof stands for are reflected in the words *souplesse d'acrobate*, which he pits against the very real horrors that the Prince has experienced, and in the *puérils calculs* which are the sign of a fundamentally frivolous outlook.

Worse, however, is to come. This time it is the Count's tactlessness which outrages the *bienséances*. 'Ce manque d'à-propos,' runs a warning sentence, 'allait tirer son bouquet.'

For Anne, who had disappeared again, reappeared wearing Naroumof's Tyrolian felt hat. He went through a few steps of a Russian dance. This confusion of folklores, this green hat with cock's feathers aroused laughter. The Prince alone did not appear to be enjoying the turn.

'Excuse me,' he said, 'but this hat belongs to me. It was given to me by some Austrian friends who had nothing else to offer me.'

A horrible chill froze the laughers. In the general uproar they had almost forgotten the presence of Naroumof. He now assumed

the appearance of a judge as though calling the laughers to order and reminding them of the respect due to misfortune. Everyone there was silently blaming some one else for having led him astray and felt more annoyed still with those who had managed to preserve some sort of proportion.

In a desperate attempt to cause a breach with her lover by letting herself down in his eyes, Mme d'Orgel decides to support her husband :

'No, Anne, like this,' she said, planting the hat on her own head.

The discomfort became boundless. Anne d'Orgel at least had the excuse of his hotheadedness and excitement, but the Countess's action showed a cold determination to go one better which was intolerable after what Naroumof had said.

She had calculated rightly.

'So that's how he degrades her,' said François to himself.

Of all the people there Naroumof was the most surprised. He repressed a movement of anger. Then he said to himself :

'I don't believe it. She can't have done it of her own accord.'

He had appreciated the Countess too well and his ancient pride refused to be taken in.

Thus the only person there who did not know her well discovered the answer. Suffering had made Naroumof more sensitive and besides he was a Russian. Two reasons for better understanding *les bizarreries du cœur*.

More than most other contemporary novelists, Radiguet is careful to avoid an imposed solution or any tampering with the findings of experience. For there is no formal ending to this book which can be compared with Mme de Clèves' retreat to her convent at the close of the *Princesse de Clèves*. The Countess, having failed to save herself by her confession to François' mother or her 'stratagem' at the party, confesses to her husband. Her success is no better. She simply finds herself trying to make him understand something which is outside his experience and which he is incapable of grasping :

On sait qu'il était dans le caractère du comte d'Orgel de ne percevoir la réalité que de ce qui se passait en public . . .

'C'est absurde . . . Il faut que nous cherchions un moyen de tout réparer . . .'

Debout dans le chambranle de la porte, Anne était beau. N'accomplissait-il pas un devoir d'une frivolité grandiose, lorsque, sortant à reculons, il employa sans se rendre compte, avec un signe de tête royal, la phrase des hypnotiseurs :

'Et maintenant, Mahaut, dormez ! Je le veux.'

It is a brilliant finish. The *frivolité grandiose* is not merely a final reference to Radiguet's theme. The *grandiose* introduces another slight modification which gives the scene the right note of comedy and points the contrast with the macabre comedy of the dinner-party. The impression is reinforced by the conjunction of the *signe de tête royal* and the *hypnotiseurs*. The comic and ridiculous figure of the Count attempts, with his grotesque benediction, to exorcise the deep and disturbing feelings which have been released and to bring everything back to the level of *frivolités*.

'Roman d'amour chaste, aussi *scabreux* que le roman le moins chaste.'—Radiguet's description of his aims in *le Bal du comte d'Orgel* looks at first like a *boutade*, but I think that he was serious. One of the most interesting things about the novel is the way in which the emphasis shifts from purity of *action* to purity of *motive*. I do not want to suggest that this is a 'religious novel,' but Radiguet's idea of purity obviously has a certain resemblance to the New Testament view. He is not concerned, however, to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian view, but to explore certain psychological consequences of abstention. He shows that these consequences—the lies and self-deception, the subterfuges and nervous strain which he describes collectively as the '*manœuvres inconscientes d'une âme pure*'—may be *morally* and *psychologically* far more damaging than the physical act of adultery which his characters contrive to avoid.

The moral is that all the weaknesses displayed by the different characters—the *stratagème(s)* as well as the *frivolités*—have their roots in the *mind*. The distinction between action and motive is therefore of capital importance. For the book is not merely a study of personal relationships; it is also a penetrating criticism of a particular section of society. The fundamental lack of seriousness which the Count reveals in his public and his private life—the escapade with the sack of paper money and his treatment of Naroumof are the signs of his frivolous attitude towards economic distress and political upheaval—is the great vice of the class to which he belongs. It explains why this class fails so signally to play its proper part in the life of the time.

III

'If he had lived, would Raymond Radiguet have taken his place among the great explorers of the human heart?' asked Jacques Rivière in the prefatory note that he wrote for *le Bal du comte d'Orgel* when it appeared in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. And he replied

that there was nothing in Radiguet's published work which justified one in taking this for granted. Rivière was one of the finest French critics of his age, but though he pays a generous tribute to Radiguet's gifts, his note is not entirely free from a certain *parti pris*. It does, however, draw attention to a difficulty which confronts the critic. When a writer dies at the age of twenty leaving behind him a handful of poems and two novels as different as *le Diable au corps* and *le Bal du comte d'Orgel*, it is clearly a waste of time to attempt a definitive judgment or to talk of assessing his importance for the development of the novel. Instead, one is tempted to speculate about the books that he might have written had he lived. This seems to me to be equally fruitless. *Le Diable au corps* is a tour de force which could never have been repeated any more than *Adolphe* could have been repeated; and *le Bal du comte d'Orgel* owes too much to the method of Mme de La Fayette for us to talk of possible technical developments.

Rivière's own bias is apparent when, later in his note, he praises Proust and Gide for having integrated *l'aberrant dans l'humain* and remarks: 'However hideous the subject, in psychology I shall always give preference to discovery provided that the discovery is a genuine one which convinces us instead of merely filling us with amazement.' It is true that he goes on to suggest that in *le Bal du comte d'Orgel* Radiguet 're-introduces, perhaps, into the study of the emotions a measure and proportion that it would be dangerous to lose' and 'reminds us of the greatness of normal feelings.' This, you may say, sounds fair enough. I suspect, however, that Rivière was inclined to overestimate the extent to which Proust and Gide succeeded in integrating the abnormal into the normal and that he himself did not altogether escape the danger of mistaking abnormality for psychological discovery. The result was that he probably underestimated Radiguet's psychological originality and the mistake had been repeated. The value of Radiguet's work does not lie least in the fact that it shows that the method of the classic novelists is still a perfectly adequate instrument for exploring the intricacies of contemporary psychology. It shows, too, that 'normal feelings' are not an exhausted seam and that the study of them is by no means incompatible with psychological 'discovery.' Finally, it suggests that the sacrifices which were certainly made when the inner monologue and other technical innovations were introduced may not all have been really necessary.

r'
ed
ch
t's
es,
ic.
a
ps
pt
he
te
his
de
the
oo
ole
ses
nd
all
is
th
Bal
dy
ous
s.'
at
ust
al
k-
at
ity
t's
of
for
ws,
at
cal
ere
cal
ry.